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LAOS 2

A HISTORIC VICTORY OF THE LAO PATRIOTIC FORCES ON HIGHWAY 9 - SOUTHERN LAOS

NEO LAO HAKSAT

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In Laos

No 2

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High significance of a great victory

The victory on Highway 9 and in Southern Laos has gone down into history as a landmark showing a new development of our resistance and that of the Indochinese peoples against US aggression.

We are very proud of our armed forces and people of various nationalities who have pooled their efforts in a monolithic unity and shared joy and suffering to achieve this glorious exploit. We express our deep gratitude to the armed forces and peoples of Viet Nam and Cambodia who have fought side by side with our people against the common enemy, the US imperialist aggressors.

In the hope of finding an issue to the impasse of the "Vietnamization" of the war, the American aggressors and their Saigon lackeys have foolishly mounted Operation "Lam Son 719" dubbed "Dewey Canyon 2". To

undertake this military venture, they have mustered 45,000 battle-seasoned US-Saigon troops, together with over 2,000 aircraft of all types, 700-800 vehicles and more than 320 heavy-caliber artillery pieces — including the second echelon in Central Viet Nam. Americans and Saigon puppets were determined to win a great military victory so as to snatch a favourable turning-point. With such great efforts and huge numbers the American brasshats thought they could very repidly display their battle-array to get direct to Tchepone, wresting an initial success to advance westward in order to reach the set objectives.

But this foolish plan has been upset. After over 50 days of diligent efforts — from January 31 to March 23 — the US Saigon troops could not go further than Ban Dong and, at last, they have suffered a complete and pitiful failure. None of the set objectives has been reached : they have not been able to enter Tchepone, neither to cut off the communications and the supply of the adversary, nor destroy his storages, nor weaken the revolutionary forces. On the contrary, their troops have disbanded without being able to escape the murderous blows of the Lao people's liberation troops.

Our victory on Highway 9 and in Southern Laos is first and foremost a military victory of a very great impact. It shows that the global strength of people's war can perfectly crush the military might to the aggressors in a large-scale strategic operation.

The armed forces and people of Southern Laos, displaying a spirit of unrelenting offensive and firmly keeping the initiative of operations, have dealt the US-puppets

thundering blows right when the latter crossed the border; they have pinned them down in Ban Dong, interdicting their entry into Tchepone. Then, after successively shattering the enemy's northern and southern columns, the Lao people's liberation troops have cut to pieces his main column on Highway 9, completely foiling his aggressive operation.

After 40 days of heroic combat — from the day the enemy crossed the border — our armed forces and people have annihilated one after the other many adverse battalions among the "tough" ones, wiped out or decimated Saigon brigades and regiments, foiled the main US-puppet tactiques, and, at last, driven more than 20,000 aggressors out of Lao territory; they have dealt thundering blows at the strategic mobile forces of the Saigon puppet army supported by maximum US firepower and logistics and backed by US infantry. Tchepone town, the liberated zone, our bases as well as our storages, transport and communication lines have been preserved. Moreover, the Lao revolution has won success both in the North and in the South, developing and consolidating its strategic assets.

Our victory on Highway 9 and in Southern Laos constitutes a murderous blow at the "Nixon doctrine" aimed in making Indochinese fight Indochinese, and at Nixon's policy of "Vietnamization" of the war.

The Nixon clique has brought the aggressive war in Laos to a very high level. After their pitiful failure in using the Vientiane right-wing troops, the Vang Pao pirates and the Thai mercenaries, the Americans have been compelled to send Saigon puppet troops against

Laos in the hope of winning a victory for their "special war".

By mounting Operation "Lam Son 719" the US aggressors wanted to prove the "independent power" of the Saigon puppet troops and the certain success of their "Vietnamization" plan. But the "test" has ended in disaster for the Saigon troops and in drama for the "Vietnamization" of the US war.

Our armed forces and people on Highway 9 Front and in Southern Laos have annihilated 2 regiments and 4 brigades, badly mauled several other brigades, wiped out 15,400 enemy troops (including 200 GIs), captured 1,000 others (among them many officers), downed, destroyed or captured 491 aircraft (helicopters for the most part), wrecked or seized 586 vehicles (of which 318 tanks and armoured cars), 44 heavy-caliber artillery pieces... Thus, over four-fifths of the invaders and almost all their vehicles and artillery pieces have been wiped out; as for the helicopters downed or destroyed, their number is slightly inferior to that of aircraft initially mobilized, that is more than half the highest figure of aircraft used in the operation.

Mention must be made that the annihilated outfits belonged to the cream of the Saigon army: paratroops, marines, armoured cavalry, rangers, regular infantry. In most cases, they have been wiped out after they had been dug in rather solid defence works, or even after they had been regrouped in thick groups of points d'appui — like in Ban Dong — enjoying a maximum US air support and backed in their rear, in nearby Vietnamese

territory, by about ten thousand GIs. This has not prevented all the puppet troops in the US pay in Laos, in South Viet Nam like in Cambodia, from being thrown into disarray and panic. The Saigon army, shock force and main trumpcard of the Yankees against the Indochinese peoples, has been completely defeated. How could the Vientiane mercenaries, the Vang Pao pirates and the Lon Nol puppet troops escape defeat in face of the militant and fraternal bloc of unity of the armed forces and peoples of Laos, Viet Nam and Cambodia ?

Our victory on Highway 9 and in the South of our country is due to our judicious revolutionary line, a clearsighted leadership of the war, a brilliant strategic and operational guidance, and a penetrating tactical command. These factors imply a mastering of the rules of war, an accurate appraisal of the enemy's strategic and operational intentions, the timely choice of the favourable moment and propitious conditions, the clever solution of difficulties, an ad hoc organization of forces, and a detailed material preparation of combats. Thanks to this direction, our fighting forces have been able to keep the initiative of operations throughout the campaign and materialize the strategic aim of the Supreme Command, thus driving the large-scale operation of the Yankees and their Saigon lackeys into complete fiasco.

Our victory on Highway 9 and in Southern Laos has testified to the outstanding progress made by our armed forces and people. Tempered by a protracted resistance fertile in trials, our people's armed forces have shown their high combat skill, striking power,

ability to fight with energy without let-up, to wipe out a whole regiment, a whole brigade and even several brigades in a single engagement, controlling the battlefield, capturing many prisoners and seizing many weapons; they have fought by day and by night, co-ordinating the action of several arms on a large-scale.

They have promoted revolutionary enthusiasm, brilliantly displaying their will to fight and to win, their combat style full of courage and stamina, as well as their dynamism in the co-ordination of various arms and outfits. They have evidenced the high political conscience of their officers and men.

Thanks to their mastering of military art, they have been able to apply the techniques and tactics of people's war in a living and creative manner, bring into full play the potential of their weapons and material, and cope with all situations. At last, our victory has scored the progress of our armed forces as regard organization and command in a co-ordinated combat. which has enabled them to cleverly apply different fighting modes and become highly efficient in all engagements. The power resulting from all these factors has allowed our people's armed forces to foil the main tactics of the Americans.

Our victory has also revealed what can give the close unity between the rear and the front. The encouragement and sustained reinforcement coming from our entire people have galvanized the combatants at the front, making them more determined and stronger to fight and to win.

The victory on Highway 9 and in Southern Laos is a common victory ot the Indochinese peoples united in

the struggle against US aggression. It is due pertly to the invaluable support and assistance extended by our brothers and friends throughout the world to our people and the fraternal peoples of Viet Nam and Cambodia.

Our entire people are proud of this glorious exploit. They are proud of our invincible infantrymen, of our clever and accurate artillerymen, of our AA crews masters of the sky in all circumstances, of our sappers "blazing the path to victory", of our young tankmen throwing consternation among the adversary, of our combatants of special outfits with wonderful courage and brilliant deeds, of our staunch drivers who devote themselves body and soul to their duties, of our signalmen, of our scouts, of our gunsmiths, of our medical corps, of our cooks... who day and night selflessly serve the fight and their comrades-in-arms so as to contribute to the common victory.

Our glorious victory has created new favourable conditions for the struggle of our people as well as for that of the other fraternal peoples of the Indochinese peninsula. It has tilted in our favour the balance of forces between us and the enemy — the US aggressors and their lackeys.

Despite their bitter failure and their critical situation on all theatres of operations in the three Indochinese countries, the US aggressors remain very stubborn and bellicose. The struggle of our people, of the Vietnamese and Cambodian peoples remains long and arduous, but it will certainly end in victory.

A new physiognomy of the war, a new impetus hare appeared since the victory on Highway 9 and in Southern

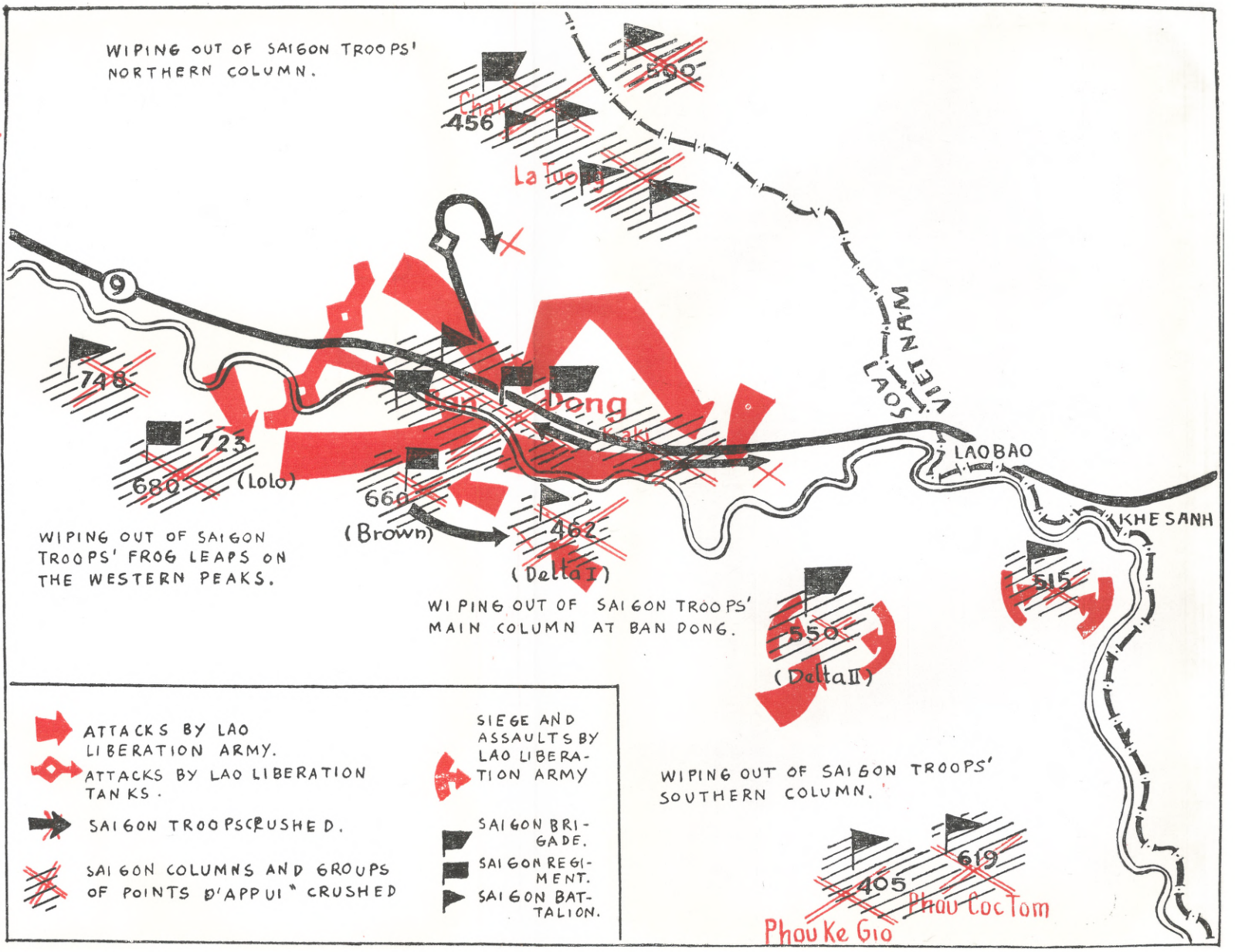
Laos. They vigorously stimulate our armed forces and people who enthusiastically forge ahead towards final victory.

"Our armed forces and people must sharpen their vigilance, tighten their unity, launch continual offensives on all theatres of operations in the impetus of our victory, fight with courage and tenaciousness until total victory." Responding to this appeal by the Supreme Command of the Lao People's Liberation Army, our armed forces and entire people are determined to combat side by side with the armed forces and people of Viet Nam and Cambodia, and drive the American imperialists out of the Indochinese peninsula to reconquer national independence, freedom and territorial integrity.

Let our armed forces and people valiantly march forward!

SKETCH OF HIGHWAY 9 FRONT

(SOUTHERN LAOS)



THE MOST IMPORTANT AGGRESSIVE OPERATION OF THE AMERICANS AND SAIGON PUPPETS COMPLETELY FOILED

In February and March 1971, our armed forces and people on the Southern Laos front, together with the Vietnamese armed forces and people on the Khe Sanh front in South Viet Nam, have fought valiant and ingenious combats, completely foiling the aggressive operation of the Americans and Saigon puppets in Laos dubbed "Lam Son 719".

We have won glorious victories of a strategic significance. These have greatly contributed to creating a new favourable situation for the patriotic struggle of the peoples of the three Indochinese countries against the American aggressors and their lackeys.

Huge forces at the service of foolish ambitions

While concocting the aggressive operation in Southern Laos, the US imperialists and their lackeye nurtured

very great ambitions. They aimed at destroying the revolutionary bases of our armed forces and people in Savannakhet province, cutting off our liberated zone, checking all relations of support and mutual aid between the peoples of the three Indochinese countries and weakening the resistance forces of our people and of the fraternal peoples of Viet Nam and Cambodia.

To realize these dark schemes, the US imperialists have unleashed against Southern Laos up to 50 US — Saigon infantry battalions belonging to the "most battle — seasoned outfits" such as the 101st paratroops division, the Americal division, the US armoured cavalry division, the puppet paratroops, rangers, marines divisions, the 1st and part of the 2nd infantry divisions. The Americans have also mobilized for this operation 4 regiments and 2 squadrons of the Saigon armour as well as 2 US armoured squadrons with over 400 tanks and armoured cars, 2 transport groups with 700 — 800 vehicles, 17 artillery battalions with 320 guns of various calibres (including the 2nd echelon based in South Viet Nam). Have participated in the operation over 2,000 aircraft of various types among which 600 — 800 helicopters, an air force unprecedented in any operation on the Indochinese theatres of operations.

The US imperialists and their lackeys thought that with so colossal forces they would easily crush us. They were so cocksure that they set a calender for their operation as follows: February 8, 1971, border crossing; February 9, arrival at Ban Dong; and February 11, entrance in Tchepone. But they have met with the determination to fight and to win of our troops and

people, the invincible strength of the militant solidarity of the revolutionary peoples of the three Indochinese countries. And their foolish enterprise ended in a most resounding failure.

Thundering initial blows

While the US imperialists and their lackeys set about realizing ther aggressive plan, our armed forces and people, animated by their ardent patriotism and hatred for the enemy, have tightened their ranks, strengthened their will to fight and to win, ready to deal stunning blows at the aggressors in execution of the orders by the LPLA Supreme Command. We have pledged to turn the forests and mountains of Southern Laos into an immense graveyard for the aggressors. And we have brilliantly fulfilled this unshakable will. On January 29, our armed forces have wiped out hundreds of Vientiane puppet troops in Muong Phalane town and liberated it. By this exploit, they have foiled the enemy scheme to use Muong Phalane as a springboard to attack the rear of the resistance forces in coordination with the "Lam Son 719" expedition. On February 4, our AA has achieved brilliant deeds in Savannakhet province, downing 5 aircraft, killing many GIs and capturing US pilots. Thus, the first aggressors to cross our border and invade our land were the Americans and it was also the Americans who were the first to be killed and captured. This flagrant fact has unmasked the ridiculous farce rigged up by Nixon and Abrams in getting planted at the Viet Nam — Laos border posters bearing the

inscription: "American soldiers not allowed to trespass the frontier" to camouflage the odious crimes of aggression by the US imperialists against our people and our country.

On February 8, on the order of his Yankee bosses, the Vietnamese traitor Nguyen Van Thieu has insolently and impudently ordered his troops to invade Southern Laos. The US imperialists and their Saigon lackeys were far from doubting that they headed toward death and that their numerous troops and powerful weapons would not prevent them from suffering bitter setbacks.

With a battle-array deployed beforehand, our armed forces and people have continually intercepted the aggressors since the start and have performed brilliant deeds: Within the first 5 days from February 8 to 12, our armed forces have downed more than 100 US aircraft, dealing smarting initial blows at the US helicopter tactics so much so that the Western press has clamoured that the liberation troops downed US helicopters as one swats flies. Our infantry and artillery outfits have fought with gallantry, launching unrelenting attacks, annihilating 5 companies of the 1st paratroops brigade, destroying 30 tanks and other armoured cars near Ban Dong, stopping short the "spearhead" of the Americans and the Saigon puppets until the day of total defeat, for their aggressive operation.

Frightened by the energy of our attacks and realizing that not only the Saigon troops could not reach Tchepone, but that their situation became even more critical, on February 11, the US imperialists hastened to order their Vientiane lackeys to launch an operation

against Muong Phalane so as to draw our forces there and relieve the Saigon troops.

This tactics, however, lamentably failed. On February 11, our armed forces have wiped out a battalion of the Vientiane army and, in the impetus of this success, they have advanced up to Dong Hen, occupied Nong Boua Lao, Houei Meun and cut to pieces the 73rd mobile group of the Vientiane puppet army south of Muong Phine. Thus they have completely thwarted the manoeuvre of the Yankees to help the Saigon puppets bogged down east of Highway 9.

The northern column crushed

Stunned by these initial setbacks, the Americans and their lackeys were all the more frightened and bewildered as they had arrogantly and aggressively behaved at the start. Their operational plan was upset and their determination shaken. In the test of the battle, their troops were panic stricken and could neither advance nor withdraw. Their brasshats from Abrams and Nguyen Van Thieu to Nguyen Cao Ky and Cao Van Vien successively came to Quang Tri in the attempt to stave off a disaster. But the more the enemy writhes, the more smarting its setbacks. As for our troops, they launch one storming attack upon another, determined to completely foil the military adventure of the Yankees and their Saigon puppets.

On February 13, we knocked down the 21st rangers battalion and the 6th paratroops battalion in the Chaki—Latuong sector, breached the northern front, directly

threatening the thrust of the enemy aggressive operation constituted by the paratroops division and the armoured outfits.

The US puppet command in Saigon had to change its operational plan. Instead of dashing towards Tchepone, the enemy was compelled to regroup so as to parry our blows. His helicopters hurriedly brought in sand bags, cement bags, iron bars... to build defence works for the Saigon outfits. But their efforts were of no avail. For our troops of various arms soon came to encircle the adversary and dealt him thundering blows. At the same time, in close cooperation with our troops on the Southern Laos front, the South Viet Nam PLAF on the Khe Sanh front repeatedly attacked the enemy from Cua Viet to Lao Bao, continually shelled his CP and logistic bases and cut off the roads to check his withdrawal. On February 20, in particular, the PLAF annihilated near Khe Sanh the 39th rangers battalion, throwing confusion and embarrassment among the Americans and Saigon puppets.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, our troops strormed Hill 456 on February 25, wiping out the 3rd paratroops battalion. It was a concerted action of infantry, artillery, AA defence and armour, crushing the adversary on the height and downing many rescuing helicopters. The enemy base was completely razed and the colonel commanding the 3rd paratroops brigade together with his staff as well as hundreds of men were captured.

This brilliant extermination battle testifies to the ability of our troops to co-ordinate the action of various arms on a large scale and to smash a big US-Saigon

outfit supported by maximum US firepower. It opens new prospects for the total annihilation of adverse troops in the aggressive operation against Southern Laos.

The counter-attacks in the North repelled, and the 3rd Saigon regiment cut to pieces in the South

Within ten days, 4 enemy battalions among the best were wiped out. On top of this, the northern column was smashed to smithereens, exposing the flank of the main body operating on Highway 9.

The US-Saigon puppets launched several counter-attacks in the hope of gaining a foothold on Hill 456 so as to reconstitute their northern column. From February 26 to March 1, three times they unleashed northward the 11th and 17th armoured squadrons along with the 8th paratroops battalion based in Ban Dong. But, all the three times this huge column supported by one hundred tanks and other armoured cars was intercepted not far from Ban Dong and suffered heavy losses. Our troops repelled all the enemy counter-attacks, completely foiling his scheme to reconstitute his northern column. During these engagements, they annihilated one armoured squadron and one paratroops battalion, destroyed and captured 116 tanks and other armoured cars.

At the same time, our troops south of Highway 9 encircled and attacked the Saigon 3rd regiment on Hills 619 and 450. On February 27 and March 1, they neatly wiped out the 2nd and 3rd battalions and

decimated the 1st battalion along with the CP of the regiment, controlling the sector, seizing a big haul of weapons and capturing many prisoners.

Our successive victories north of Ban Dong and in the sector of Hills 405 and 619 greatly stimulated our armed forces. On the contrary, the moral of the adverse troops was badly shaken and the Ban Dong group was obviously threatened with destruction.

The Saigon troops wiped out by whole regiment and brigade on the southern hills, the main group of Ban Dong annihilated, the aggressive operation completely foiled

Although doomed to fail, the US-Saigon puppets kept on intensifying their psychological warfare, clamouring that they had reached their set objectives; on the other hand, they mobilized other troops to reinforce their effectives in Laos. Thus the marines division was withdrawn from the Nam Bo delta in South Viet Nam and Cambodia to be hurled into Operation "Lam Son 719" together with 2 regiments of the 1st infantry division.

The helicopter tactics and the infantry-armour coordination having failed, the aggressors resorted to "leapfrogging", "mobility tactics", and "hill-top bolts". At the same time, they clamoured orbi at orbi that they had entered Tchepone.

They tried to land the regiments No 1 and No 2 of the 1st division on Hills 748, 723, 660 and Ta Pang south of Highway 9. From these heights, with their

artillery they could dominate a vast zone north and south of the road as well as the sector west of Ban Dong.

But they had reckoned without the action of their adversary. The accurate and murderous fire of our troops prevented the landing on the Ta Pang; on March 6, we downed 31 helicopters including 6 "flying cranes". After that the liberation troops surrounded and pounded Hills 748, 723, and 660, compelling the enemy to dug in deeper while awaiting the end.

In the south, the US-Saigon puppets landed the 147th and 258th marines brigades on Hills 550, 940 and Phou Ko Bok. These outfits were immediately encircled and shelled; their attempts to loosen the grip suffered heavy losses.

On March 11, the adversary hastily evacuated Hill 748, leaving intact 10 artillery pieces. Our troops received the order to tighten their vice and launch vigorous attacks to raze the groups of points d'appui. From March 15 to 18, they assaulted the positions of the 1st Saigon regiment in the sector of Hill 723, completely annihilating this outfit, killing the commanding colonel, capturing hundreds of prisoners and seizing all the weapons. Then it was the turn of the 2nd regiment to be wiped out on March 20 on Hill 660; 90 helicopters were downed there, 400 men captured and a big amount of weapons and material collected. During these engagements the remnants of Saigon troops fled helter skelter, brushing aside their officers, scrambling for a place in the helicopters, and even hanging to their skids.

In the impetus of then successes, our troops attacked the main group of points d'appui in Ban Dong and annihilated the 147th marines brigade on Hill 550. Our victory of Ban Dong was won on March 20 with the wiping out of the 1st Saigon paratroops brigade and of the "special mission" armoured brigade No 1: nearly 200 vehicles were destroyed or captured (tanks and other armoured cars for the most part), over 80 helicopters downed, 2 helicopters seized intact, 22 artillery pieces destroyed or collected.

The great victory of Ban Dong galvanized our troops, and sowed panic among the adversary. The 147th marines brigade received the order to flee under the cover of US planes, including B-52s. But our troops, far from loosening their vice, wiped out one battalion after another, and on March 23 the 147th brigade was completely annihilated, while the 258th marine brigade was decimated. Thus ended the historic battle on Highway 9, and the aggressive operation of the US—Saigon puppets against Southern Laos met with complete failure after over 40 days of fighting.

The enemy had thrown into the adventure one infantry division and one paratroops division, the equivalent of one rangers regiment, and 2 marines brigades. All these "elite outfits" were defeated and decimated.

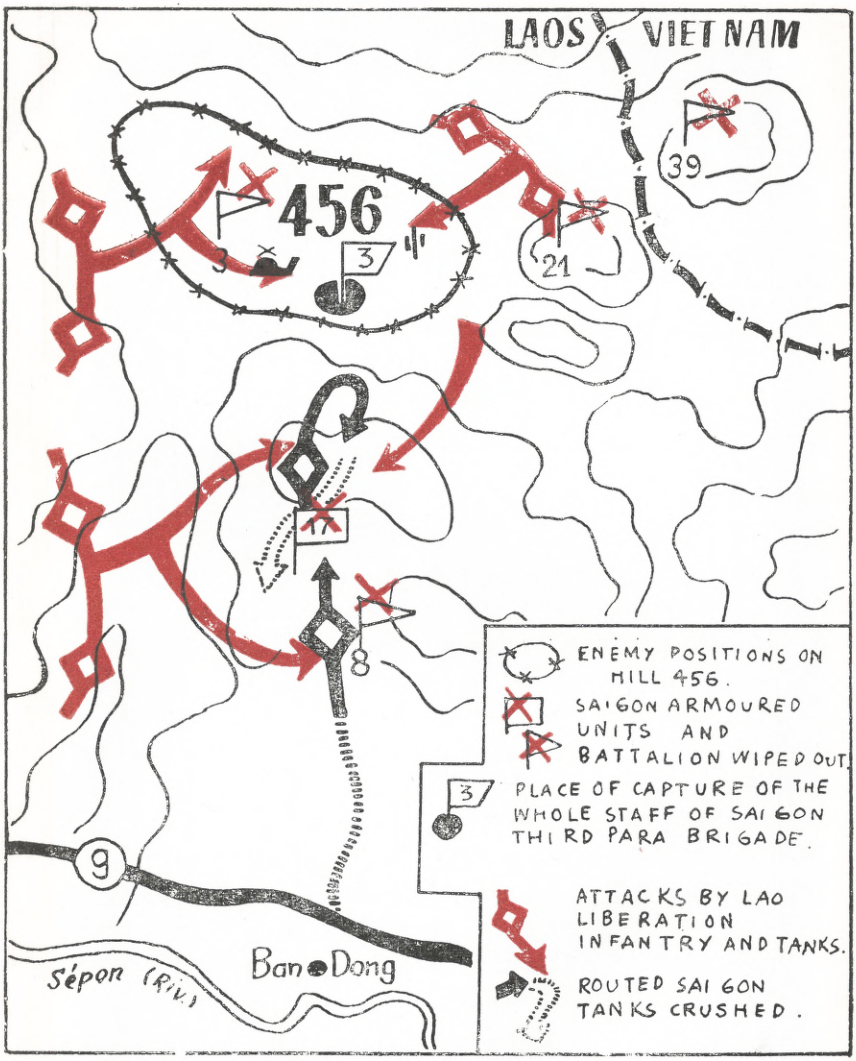
US air support to Saigon troops reached a scale unprecedented on the Indochinese theatres of war. The price amounted to 496 aircraft of all types downed or destroyed on the ground.

A colossal quantity of US war means was thrown into the operation: nearly 150 artillery pieces and 600 vehicles (tanks and other armoured cars for the most part). All this material was destroyed and littered the battlefields beside the corpses of the aggressors.

With the complete smashing of operation "Lam Son 719", the Lao armed forces and people have frustrated the foolish strategic ambitions of the Americans and their Saigon lackeys.

This great historic victory has shown that our armed forces and people have made considerable progress in their struggle against US aggression. They have foiled all the enemy tactics and stratagems, and defeated the strongest mercenary army of the US imperialists in Indochina with maximum US firepower and logistics.

This victory is a magnificent illustration of the militant solidarity between our people and the fraternal peoples of Viet Nam and Cambodia. Our victory in Southern Laos together with that of the Vietnamese people on the Khe Sanh front has dealt a sledgehammer blow at the US imperialists' aggressive will. It has created a new situation very farourable to the unfolding of the resistance of the Indochinese peoples against US aggression until complete victory.



WIPING OUT OF U.S. SAIGON NORTHERN COLUMN ON HILL 456

(Map of operations)

BATTLE ON HILL 456, FINAL STAGE OF LIQUIDATION OF US–SAIGON NORTHERN COLUMN

After having two ranger battalions and one paratroop battalion wiped out on Hill 500 and in the Chaki-Latuong sector, the US-Saigon aggressors suffered an unprecedented disaster: on February 25, in broad day light, a whole battalion of Saigon paratroops was crushed by our tanks and all its staff taken prisoner on Hill 456.

After the loss of that position, the entire enemy front north of Highway 9 collapsed, seriously affecting the initial plan of operation. Unwilling to evacuate this base, the enemy unleashed on February 26, 70 tanks of the 17th armoured squadron and the whole of the 8th paratroop battalion in an effort to retake Hill 456.

But the counter-attack was repelled and the enemy had to fall back to the defensive and to change his battle array.

The northern shield

It was made up of two hillocks—codenamed Peak 31 by the enemy — at 10km north of Ban Dong of which they were the shield. Hill 456 and two ranges of hills in the southeast and southwest, 2km apart, constitute the base defended by the Third Para Brigade. The brigade CP and 3rd battalion took up position on Hill 456. The 2nd battalion was stationed on a nameless hill in the southeast and the 6th battalion on another anonymous one in the southwest (that battalion was wiped out on February 13). The base on Hill 456 was close to the peaks in the Chaki—Latuong region crossing the Lao-Vietnamese frontier to Hill 500 (Lang Sen—Quang Tri) held by the 1st ranger battalion. The whole system constituted the northern frontline defending the flank of the main column operating on Highway 9.

On Hill 456, the enemy artillery could cover Ban Dong and pound the surroundings of that road up to the Lao—Vietnamese frontier. From there the enemy reckoned that his guns could repel the attacks made against his column progressing on Highway 9. No wonder that since the beginning of the operation, the Americans had landed the Saigon troops on the peaks of the Chaki—Latuong sector. On Hill 456 was located the CP of Nguyen Van Tho, colonel commanding the 3rd Para Brigade, built on the southeastern flank and composed of the brigade gun emplacement (6 105mm guns), a sappers' company with bulldozers, a signal company, a commanding company; close to it was the 3rd battalion CP; on the southwestern flank was a paratroop company. The two other companies were scattered around Tho's CP to defend it.

Regarding Position 456 as a shield protecting Ban Dong, the Americans supplied to Tho materials to consolidate it such as barbed wire, mines, fortifications.

Paratroops beleaguered

On the third day of the operation, the Saigon paras began feeling they were encircled. According to the US plan, the column advancing along Highway 9 would reach Tchepone on February 11. General Hoang Xuan Lam would hold there a press conference and declare that the « republican army » was stalking along the Ho Chi Minh trail. However, on the Ban Dong side, his tanks and paratroops could not make an inch farther whereas in the North the liberation troops mounted a pincer attack on the 21st and 39th ranger battalions, the 2nd and 3rd paratroop battalions and Colonel Tho's CP.

On February 13, the northern column was split asunder, losing the 21st ranger battalion and the 6th paratroop battalion operating in the middle of the battle-array. On February 19, while the third battalion and 3rd paratroop brigade CP were taken in the pincer movement of our troops, on the other side, the Vietnamese PLAF wiped out the 39th ranger battalion on Hill 500. The enemy's northern column began to the pinned down. In the last ten days of the month, his situation grew from bad to worse: the paratroops on Hill 456 dug in further to ward off the blows of our combatants who were then touching the fence of the enemy position. Colonel Tho later on declared: « Four

days without water. A stream ran at the foot of the hill but nobody dared to go and draw water. The most devastating was that your artillery and AA barrage fire drove away all US planes.

A chopper once succeeded in dropping four cans of water but three fell outside the position and burst out... »

As time elapsed, the Saigon paratroops on Hill 456 faced an untenable situation. Not being able to beat a retreat, they ran the risk of being annihilated. Nguyen Van Tho said later on that the officers under his command had accused the Americans and Hoang Xuan Lam of making empty promises and of sending them to their death.

Our tanks operated in broad daylight

On February 25, as usual, cannon shells were lobbed from time to time on top of Hill 456, garrisoned by Saigon paratroops. But at 3 p.m. soon after a shower of hardware, hums of engines were heard from the northwest and southeast. Our tanks appeared within one kilometre from the paratroops who took to their hells. They crushed the fence and the barbed wire and dashed toward the enemy CP, followed by our footmen who overran the enemy battle-array and wiped out its elements one after the other.

Our tanks then silenced the firing-nests, and trumbled the ordnance pieces, their drone mingling with cannon boom and machine gun strafing. Suddenly, tank No 555 ran on top of the trench of the para

brigade command. After firing some salvoes and hurling some grenades, our men called the enemy to surrender.

« We give up to the revolutionary fighters », a voice was heard from an underground.

Then came out of the trench a column of officers, their hands up. One of them, a stout man about forty with short-cropped hair and slanting eyes, stammered: « I am Nguyen Van Tho, colonel commanding the Third Para Brigade. I give up to you. »

After less than one hour of fighting, the whole staff of the Para Brigade was captured and the Third Battalion wiped out. All the northern column was smashed, its news reaching the US command in Saigon like a bomb explosion. General Abrams dispatched his assistant to Khe Sanh to make on-the-spot investigation. Impossible for the Americans and their Saigon quislings to hide their disaster of Hill 31. A few days later, at the prisoners' camp, colonel Nguyen Van Tho told of his misfortune as follows:

" We were upset by many surprises: surprise caused by your artillery and AA batteries, surprise by your tanks, chiefly their operation in broad daylight. As soon as my men were informed by the 31st and 34th companies stationed nearly that PLAF tanks had made their appearance, they immediately ran for life. Even my assistant, a lieutenant colonel, fled away. The aircraft I had asked for did not come, few of my men remained, and their moral was very low. I was powerless. "

Counter-attack crushed

The capture of Hill 456 dealt a staggering blow at all the three columns involved in the operation. In over two weeks, the enemy took 3,000 casualties out of 20,000 men fielded, and lost over 100 helicopters out of the 500 engaged in Operation "Lam Son 719".

On February 26, the enemy unleashed the 8th Para Battalion for a counter-attack supported by 70 tanks of the 17th squadron based at Ban Dong, trying to recapture Hill 456. The long column fell into an ambush laid by the liberation troops and was heavily pounded by artillery before being intercepted by tanks and foot soldiers. Whittled down, part of the enemy tanks fell back to Ban Dong, another one was bunched up at the foot of an anonymous hillock southeast of Hill 456, trying to offer some resistance; but it was taken to task by one of the Lao people's armed units and mown down. US planes came to the rescue of the Saigon troops but not efficiently as they were hunted by our AA guns. Subjected to an accurate and murderous fire, they turned tail, dumping their bombs and rockets at random.

*

* *

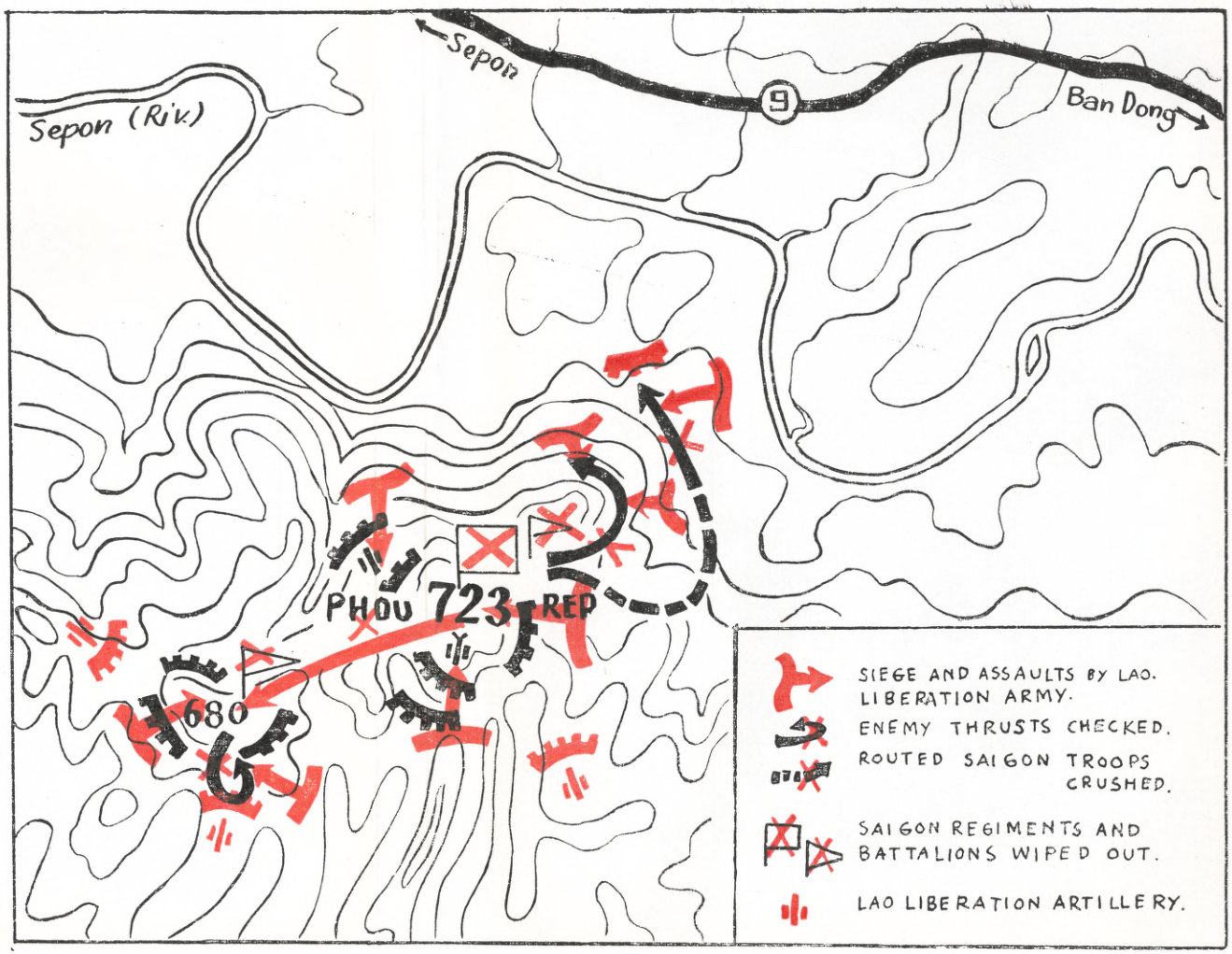
The double feat-of-arms of our troops on Hill 456 has greatly contributed to the liquidation of the northern column of the operation and delivered a crushing blow at the moral of the Saigon invading army. It paved the way to a series of big battles on the hills

of the Highway 9 — Southern Laos area and marked the immense progress made by our army with regard to the most efficient coordination of various arms in major engagements.

It testifies to the fighting capacity of our troops who have foiled the two main US tactics namely the heli-borne tactics and the infantry — armour coordination and have beaten hollow the best units of the elite arms of the Saigon army such as: Rangers, Paratroops, armour, despite the maximum air and artillery cover of the Americans.

WIPING OUT OF FIRST REGIMENT OF SAIGON DIVISION «RED ONE» ON HILL 723

(Map of Operations)



WIPING OUT ON HILL 723 OF THE FIRST REGIMENT, THE STRONGEST UNIT OF THE SAIGON DIVISION "RED ONE"

On March 18, 1971, after three days of unremitting attacks, the Lao liberation troops completely overran the group of points d'appui of the Saigon 1st Regiment on Hill 723, also called Mount Phou Rep. This was the strongest regiment of the 1st Infantry division nicknamed by US Defence Secretary Melvin Laird Division "Red One" of the Saigon army.

The brilliant victory won on Hill 723 was a shining example of the determination of our troops to fight and to win, their rapid growth, and their degree of organization and command of big battles.

Initial stunning blows

After the liquidation of the northern column of Operation "Lam Son 719", the important group of points

d'appui at Ban Dong landed in a most critical situation. All retreat routes were cut off and its exposed flanks were subjected to the onslaughts of our troops operating from Ban Dong to Houei San on Highwag 9. The enemy could neither proceed westward to Tchepone nor withdraw to the east. His armoured units and paratroop brigade were the targets of violent poundings and the whole garrison was threatened with annihilation.

The 1st marine division coming to the rescue received orders to land part of its forces in order to relieve the 1st regiment stationed on Hill 550. The remaining contingent was put in reserve. The two regiments of the 1st infantry division, not yet engaged — the 3rd regiment being knocked out on Hill 619—landed on Hills 748, 723 and 660 of the mountain range overlooking the southern part of Highway 9.

The most important of all, Hill 723, 13 km southeast of Tchepone, was occupied by the 1st regiment, from where the enemy could strike Tchepone and control a vast region. The northern slope of that position, near Highway 9, was very steep; the southern slope, close to mountains, was very hard to negotiate.

Operating on a terrain propitious to defence and counting on its huge fire-power and build-up, the US-Saigon command thought its troops would be able to achieve its designs while warding off the fatal blows of our armed forces. In the undoubtful case our units would manage to draw near their positions, it would still be possible for them to evacuate by choppers in no time, even before any exchange of fire could take place. Then

it remained for our troops to reap the crop of their bombs and shells.

However the odds were against the enemy. Bases 723 and 660 were completely overrun by our men.

Since their landing on the heights south of Highway 9, the invading troops had received stinging blows. On March 6, on the peaks of Ta Pang, our AA batteries downed 16 helicopters seeking to land troops there. On the night of March 7, the liberation fighters made surprise attacks on Hill 723, against a CP, artillery positions and the signal centre, killing 300 enemy troops, destroying and seizing 10 ordnance pieces and ammunition depots.

On March 11, the enemy evacuated the hillock west of Hill 723, leaving behind 10 heavy guns. This showed the confusion prevailing in the enemy's ranks and also the beginning of his stampede in Operation "Lam Son 719". Aware of the imminent debacle of the US-Saigon army, the Lao People's Army Supreme Command instructed various units to close in upon the enemy, harass him, cut his air routes and land convoys, liquidate his units one by one and prevent him from running away.

Our infantry, artillery and AA units obeyed strictly these orders, moved rapidly and tightened their noose around Base 723 codenamed base Lolo by the enemy.

Deluge of hardware and fire on the enemy hideouts

Closely beleaguered, the Saigon troops at Base 723 tried to ward off our assaults pending their evacuation by helicopters according to the "mobile tactics" boasted

by the Americans. On March 7, the base commanders compelled their men to move inward to delude us as to the targets we had to hit at and also to spot our positions which would be exposed while American planes struck hard at the surroundings.

On the morning of March 14, our guns pounded the Saigon 1st Regiment. The first salvoes hit the gun emplacement, destroying four artillery pieces and silencing the others. The enemy fortifications, underground trenches and depots were blasted. All the Phou Rep range was set aflame.

The enemy position was now in a great turmoil. The panic-stricken commanders called for planes which, as soon as they came, were assailed by our AA batteries which downed five. The others turned tail after releasing their bomb load at random.

In face of the impotence of aircraft, a company taking up position at a peak on Hill 680 received orders to sally out so as to ease our pressure, but it was immediately pinned down and took 60 casualties; the survivors were captured.

Completely encircled, the position was connected with higher level only by radio. All its request for reinforcement remained unanswered. The mercenaries reproved the daily ration of dry food which only parched their throat. A copter daringly flew over the base and dropped six cans of water, but five fell on our lines; only the sixth one managed to land on the position. When the Saigon troops rushed out to have a drink, they were assailed by our shells; many of them were

killed; the wounded brawled and bemoaned. Later on, the prisoners told that our bombardments had made life unbearable for them.

Another frightful day for the enemy

On the morning of March 15, the sky was serene. Base 723 distinctly showed up against a blue background. Through their field-glasses, the observers could single out every fortification, every shelter of the enemy position. At seven o'clock sharp, a shower of shells fell on the refuge of the aggressors. Those who were not killed on the spot were badly shaken and took to flight, pursued by our mortar shelling. Those who escaped from the base compound were all mown down before they could make an escape.

The colonel commanding the regiment was killed by a big mortar shell lobbed right on his shelter. Deprived of commander, the Saigon troops were thrown in utter confusion. Taking advantage of that situation, our footmen stormed the enemy CP and captured the highest peak of the hill; from there they coordinated their action with our units outside the position to push their attack on the southwest sector and against the elements regrouped on the northeast flank. Our combatants held a vantage ground as they occupied a higher position. Their accurate fire inflicted a heavy casualty on the enemy. The survivors who fled in the northwest direction were waylaid by our sappers.

Harassed from all sides, the enemy ran to the left only to be within range of our mortars. When the shelling stopped, our men pounced on the fugitives who raised their hands to surrender.

A haul

With the loss of the northern sector, the enemy garrison on Hill 723 was more tightly encircled. All its attemps to sally out failed. Its requests for reinforcements received from Khe Sanh and even Saigon a similar answer: «Impossible for supply planes to land owing to enemy heavy fire», or « Try to join Base Brown by land» (Reuter, March 16).

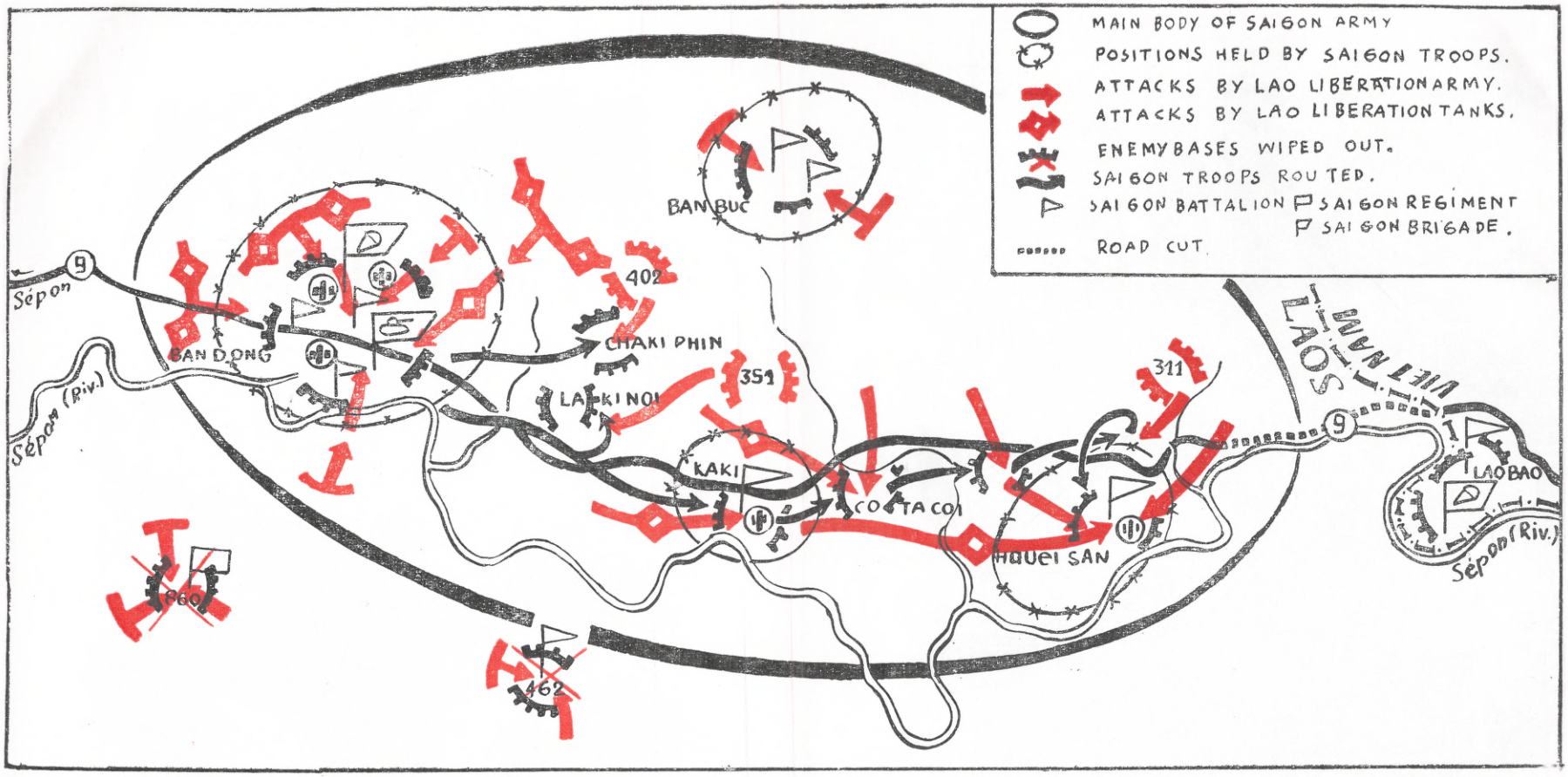
But how could these badly battered and demoralized troops get through the siege laid by our units while they were subject every day to our shelling and strafing? At lull, the liberation troops' loudspeakers called the Saigon mercenaries to surrender.

In the face of this ticklish situation, the Americans made use of great numbers of armed helicopters, tactical jet planes and even B.52s to support the 1st regiment of the Saigon army. The super-bombers' loads fell less than 600 metres from the fence of the base (AP March 16). But these heavy bombardments and strafings never affected the dash of our troops who tightened their noose further. With regard to the American air pirates, they were duly punished, having 23 aircraft of various types downed by our AA defence on March 15 and 16 alone.

At three o'clock on the morning of March 17, the final assault was given. After a heavy shelling, our men dashed on the enemy dug-outs, killing the commanders and calling on the puppet soldiers to give up. Base 723 was overrun. Our troops took many prisoners.

Our AA batteries continued to hunt US planes and our artillery to support our footmen in their pursuit of the remnants of the 4th battalion who, operating in the base under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Le Huan, stampeded towards Hill 660 (Base Brown). Intercepted half-way, they attempted to fall back on the north and reach Ban Dong, but were assailed by the Liberation units who killed about one hundred of them, including Le Huan, and took over 70 prisoners.

With this haul ended the battle on Hill 723 in which our various arms closely coordinated their action and wiped out completely one of the most seasoned regiments of the Saigon puppet army.



WIPING OUT OF THE MAIN BODY OF SAIGON INVADING ARMY AT BAN DONG

(Map of operations)

BAN DONG
A BATTLE
OF STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

Still burning in the fire of the victorious battle, Ban Dong has just added a glorious page in the history of our Lao people in their great resistance war against US aggression and for national salvation. It needed only 40 days of heroic struggle for our people's liberation army to stop dead a whole 45-Saigon multi-battalion force and crush the invaders in that "gigantic enclave".

In Operation "Lam Son 719" mounted by the Americans and their Saigon lackeys, the main column progressed along Highway 9 with the mission to make junction at Ban Dong and establish there a solid springboard from which to storm Tchepone and to deploy north and south in order to destroy the resistance bases and cut off the communication and supply lines of the revolutionary forces. That "heavy mission" was entrusted to two paratroop brigades (the 1st and

2nd) and two armoured battalions (the 11th and 17th) of the Saigon army with unlimited US air artillery and logistic support. That main body was protected on its left flank by the 3rd paratroop Brigade and the 1st Ranger multi-battalion group and on the right by the 3rd Regiment of the 1st division. Then, US infantry was positioned along the Lao—Vietnamese frontier ready to intervene in case of need.

However hardly had the enemy come to Ban Dong when he was engulfed in the flames of the people's war which would consume the ambitious design of the US and Saigon lackeys in their military adventure in Southern Laos.

The ennemy pinned down

On order from the US Command, on February 8, 1971, a "special mission" of Saigon troops composed of two paratroop brigades and two armoured battalions crossed the frontier. Relying on the mobility of his heliborne tactics and the shock force of his armour, the enemy banked on the surprise factor to rapidly occupy Ban Dong. But the Lao liberation army command had seen through his plans and gave to all units the order to stop the enemy at Ban Dong.

This clear-cut and fully assured order which resounded all over the front voiced the unshakable will of all the troops of the Lao people's liberation army. After many days of frantic preparations, the occasion came to wipe out the enemy. Infantry, artillery, AA units, the engineering corps and armour, in short all the

arms of the Lao liberation army entered the lists and deployed according to a conceived battle-array. Countering the first attacks of the enemy, they meted out due punishment to the invaders. Wreckage of aircraft of various types, of tanks, armoured cars and military vehicles littered the road of the invading hordes and their logistic services. After three days of difficult progression, checked by the patriotic troops, the Saigon mercenaires arrived at Ban Dong but were immediately beleaguered while the remaining forces cut up all along Highway 9, from Ban Dong to Lao Bao. Many times, they tried to ease the pressure of the liberation troops in order to extend the front and consolidate their staging base for their ultimate effort to capture Tchepone. But they failed in their attempt, all their assaults against Hills 301, 311, 402, 460 were foiled. The desperate counter-attack made by the enemy from February 9 to 11 against Kaki with a view to establishing a bridgehead between Ban Dong and Lao Bao was repulsed with heavy losses for the invaders: 5 paratroop companies wiped out and over 30 tanks and armoured vehicles destroyed.

While our infantrymen continued to tighten their noose around the enemy's position, our artillery and AA poured day and night their hardware on his army units and vehicle parks, and wove in the sky a dense network of croos-fire most murderous to US helicopters carrying supply to the Saigon troops. In the first days of their occupation of Ban Dong, the latter as acknowledged by the Saigon puppet command itself, were virtually cut off from their second line and threatened with annihilation (AFP, February 25).

To help the Saigon troops get out of that critical situation, American aircraft, including B.52s, frenziedly attacked the periphery of the battlefield but were chased away by the efficiency of the AA batteries of the liberation army whose "terrible fire power" mowed down a record number of them.

While the main column was pinned down at Ban Dong and the "task force" brigade compelled to fall back to the defensive after taking heavy casualties, the northern column had two paratroop battalions and two ranger battalions wiped out and the whole staff of the 3rd paratroop brigade captured on Hill 456. In the southern column, the Saigon 31st regiment was put out of action, and two battalions written off the muster roll at Phou Ke Gio and Phou Kok Tom.

The whole Operation "Lam Son 719" was threatened with a heavy failure. The US-Saigon command hurriedly hurled in the tussle two other regiments (the 1st and the 2nd) of the Saigon 1st division, which landed on peaks southeast of the Phou Rep mountain range and launched a counter-attack north of Highway 9 to protect the flanks of the main column. On February 26, the 8th battalion of the 2nd paratroop regiment and the 17th armoured battalion stationed at Ban Dong made a thrust in the direction of Hill 456 in order to set an enclave serving as shield. But their attempt fizzled out. In coordination with our artillery, AA defence and armoured units, our footmen vigorously repulsed all the enemy assaults. After six days of fighting (from February 26 to March 3), the large-scale counter-attack of the enemy was smashed, resulting in the liquidation

of the 8th paratroop battalion and the 17th armoured battalion: 400 men put out of action, 84 tanks and armoured vehicles wrecked or seized. The few survivors ran towards Ban Dong, leaving behind vehicles and ordnance pieces as well as their dead and wounded.

Thus, about one month after its starting, the US-Saigon ambitious operation to take Tchepone ended in a complete fiasco. Despite the massive intervention of "all the US air force in Indochina" (AFP), the Saigon troops could only reach Ban Dong (about half-way to Tchepone), to be pinned down there.

The noose tightens and the attacks are stepped up to pin down the enemy

Quickly falling into the Lao people's snare, the Saigon mercenaries were brought at bay with the noose of the liberation troops tightening around them. Landing in a cleft stick, they clustered to organize a desperate defence. Early in March, nominally the main column still had 7 paratroop battalions and 4 armoured battalions known under the name of "task force" brigade. But these forces were seriously impaired and their moral most sagging. They had to be bunched up in four groups of defence positioned from Ban Dong to Houei San.

In the central group at Ban Dong, the enemy forces were divided into three sectors; Sector 1 in the northeast angle of Ban Dong crossroads, Sector 2 on Highway 9 itself and Sector 3 a little slanting towards

the south. They were composed of 3 paratroop battalions, the 11th armoured battalion, and the remnants of the 17th armoured battalion, 3 artillery positions and 2 helicopter pads. The staffs of the paratroop and armoured units were set up respectively in Sectors 1 and 2. All this disposition was protected by three barbed-wire entanglements separated by anti-tank and anti personnel mine-fields. Tanks were operating between the barbed-wire rows in the important directions to strengthen the defence.

A paratroop battalion and part of the 4th Armoured battalion were stationed at Kaki, where was located a gun emplacement.

Two paratroop battalions took up position at Ban Bouk.

A paratroop battalion, and some elements of the 3rd armoured battalion occupied Houei San together with an artillery position.

All these groups were protected by barbed wire fences and mine-fields. In addition to its own artillery, Ban Dong was also covered by heavy guns based at Khe Sanh and Ta Pouk and by American aircraft.

In order to boost the moral and combativeness of the Saigon troops and ease the pressure of the patriotic forces, American planes, including B.52s, frenziedly bombarded the surrounding to prevent the eventual assaults of our units. But neither the US air force nor artillery could save the Saigon garrison beleaguered at Ban Dong from being annihilated.

From March 7 onwards, the infantry, artillery and AA units of the liberation army, operating in close

coordination with one another, completed the blockade of the enemy on land and in the air. It was thus impossible for the Saigon troops to loosen the noose around them and for the American choppers to fly low to drop supplies and take the wounded away. The Ban Dong garrison was denied contact with other units and received no reinforcements from the second line. Our artillery gave the enemy at Ban Dong and Houei San a good thrashing while silencing the adverse guns based at Lao Bao and Ta Pouk.

While Ban Dong was brought to bay because of the investment and continual assaults of our forces, the southern column of the enemy was harassed without let up. On March 17, after taking Peak 723 and wiping out the 1st infantry regiment, our troops began to besiege the 2nd infantry regiment on Peak 660 and the Saigon 147th marine brigade on Peak 550. Receiving no US air cover and supply, the main enemy group on Highway 9 was disorganized.

As the fate of Ban Dong hung upon a thread, the enemy command, thrown into an utter confusion, gave it orders to leave behind weapons, materials, their dead and wounded, and to try the ultimate sauve-qui-peut. But by what means? All avenue of escape by air was cut by our AA batteries whose "devastating" fire barrage made all heliborne attempt impossible. Highway 9 being cut by the people's forces in many sections, all retreat by road was forbidden for the enemy. The frenzied intervention of American aircraft was powerless to open a salvation route for the Saigon troops. Nearly all their positions were under the fire of our artillery,

and their tanks and other armoured vehicles, caught in a pincer movement of the liberation troops, became impotent.

Main group of enemy points d'appui wiped out by a masterly blow

Our troops continued to tighten their noose around the enemy who, for lack of taking Tchepone, was pinned down at Ban Dong without being able to make an inch forward for a whole month and landed in such a predicament that all retreat was impossible. All the units and arms of the liberation army, eager to achieve some feats-of-arms, waited for orders from the Front Command to rush on the enemy main group entrenched at Ban Dong in order to break the spine of Operation "Lam Son 719"

Our artillery pounded Ban Dong, Kaki, Ban Bouk and Houei San throughout May 17, and hit the CPs of the 1st paratroop brigade and of the armoured task force brigade, the artillery positions, parks of motorized vehicles, the depots and defence works of the enemy. The whole compound came under a heavy fire of the liberation troops. The enemy battle-array was more and more disorganized. American planes made a great fuss but, hunted by our AA guns, could not give any support to the Saigon troops now bogged down in the quagmire and waiting for their doom. Nor could they check the advance of the liberation units towards the enemy hideout.

After a heavy bombardment, on the morning of March 18, receiving the signal for the general assault, the Lao liberation troops rushed from various directions on the enemy positions. Supported by our armoured vehicles, the western wing soon overcoming the barbed wire entanglement, made their thrust deep in the enemy lines. Coordinating its operation with the northern and southern wings, that spearhead was directed against the brigade and the armoured task force brigade. From their fortifications and armour the enemy began to riposte in many directions. But the valiant liberation fighters clung to the terrain and disputed with the enemy each trench and foiled all his onsets. The engagement lasted all day long on March 18 and ended with the annihilation of an enemy paratroop battalion and an armoured battalion in the western sector and with the clipping of his battle-array. Taking heavy casualties and frightened, the enemy tried to fall back to the eastern sector to continue the resistance. However our units covered by tanks quickly foiled that manœuvre, inflicted a toll of 500 enemy lives, and destroyed 14 tanks and other armoured vehicles.

On March 19, our troops continued their attacks north and south of Ban Dong, where the enemy put up a desperate resistance. Another battalion was put out of action and the 7th armoured battalion badly mauled. The survivors, panic-stricken, fled in the direction of Kaki bridge. Taken between a cross-fire, the northern column of the Saigon army stampeded back to Chaki Phin where it was entirely annihilated on the night of March 19. Intercepted on Highway 9, part of the southern

column succeeded in reaching Kaki but the bulk of this force had to cluster at Laki Noi where it was wiped out on the same night. Meanwhile, in the invested Ban Bouk garrison, two paratroop battalions were decimated on March 20 and the survivors ran to Chaki Phin and Laki Noi.

After losing the central sector of Ban Dong and the group at Ban Bouk, the enemy was incapable of any attack. He was bunched up at Kaki and Houei San, trying to beat a retreat towards Lao Bao. But how that so called "tactical movement" could save a demoralized beleaguered unit from annihilation? Despite the fact that Lao Bao was separated from Kaki — Houei San by a dozen kilometres only, the routed Saigon troops found it very far and none of the most up-to-date means of conveyance could save them from that severe trial.

On March 21 and 22, Kaki was stormed by a new coordinated action of the infantry, artillery AA units and armour of the Liberation forces whereas Houei San was tightly encircled. Assailed from all parts, the Kaki garrison was soon disposed of and the survivors ran higgledy-piggledy towards Co Ta Koi, hotly pursued by our men. Turning northward, the runaways tried to cross the jungle in the direction of Viet Nam, but intercepted by our men on Hill 311, they had to return to Houei San. In the flush of their victory, our troops stormed Houei San and overran the last sector of the enemy main group on Highway 9. In that last battle, a paratroop battalion and the remnants of the 4th armoured battalion were struck off the rolls.

After 40 days of investment and 5 days of urremitting attacks, the Lao liberation army succeeded in wiping out the main group of the Saigon composed of the 1st paratroop brigade and the 1st armoured task force brigade. An important force of the Saigon army was thus completely crushed in the big enclave of Ban Dong. The liberation troops put out of action about one thousand enemy soldiers, destroyed or captured nearly 200 military vehicles (mostly tanks and armoured cars) downed 80 choppers and seized intact two others and captured or damaged 22 ordnance pieces.

The brilliant victory of Ban Dong which broke the backbone of Operation "Lam Son 719" has shown the high combativeness, the high organizational level and command and efficient combat coordination of the Lao people's liberation army. This was a big battle of extermination of strategic significance, testifying to the invincibleness of the revolutionary armed forces and highlighting their great capabilities. They succeeded in developing the combined powerful action of the three categories of troops and all arms to foil all US new tactics, wipe out big units of the Saigon army propped up by GIs and supported by the US air force, artillery and logistics.

With the Ban Dong disaster which dragged in it the fall of other positions held by the Saigon aggressors on Hills 660 and 550, ended dramatically the US military adventure in Southern Laos. This defeat challenges the US testing of the "independent might" of the Saigon puppet army and marks a new fiasco of the «Nixon doctrine» which consists of pitting Indochinese

against Indochinese. It gives the proof that the formula "Puppet troops + US fire power and logistics" has brought nothing good to the US "special war" in Laos. Be their Vientiane puppet troops, Vang Pao's bandits, Thai mercenaries or Saigon invaders, all were beaten hollow. With regard to US fire power, despite the massive intervention of the US air force in a bid to back the Saigon invading army, it was also overcome by the Lao liberation armed forces and people.

The victory at Ban Dong, closely associated with the whole successful campaign on the Highway 9 — Southern Laos front, constitutes a landmark of the progress made by the Lao People's Liberation Army in the coordination of its various arms. It crowns a long process of training and growth of the Lao armed forces and people. It is also a brilliant success of the militant solidarity between the armies and peoples of Laos, Viet Nam and Cambodia.

The victory of Ban Dong which resounds all over the country, raises the moral of the Lao army and people and encourages them to march forward in the impetus of their victories so as to completely defeat the US imperialist aggressors in coordination with other Indochinese peoples.

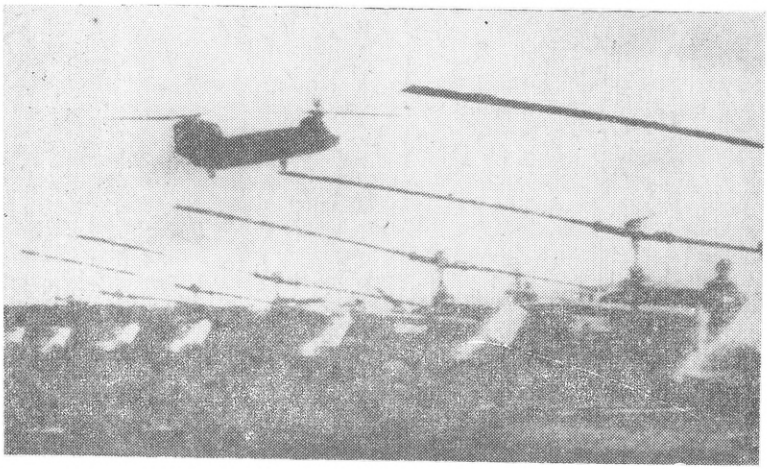
496 US AIRCRAFT SHOT DOWN OR DESTROYED IN SOUTHERN LAOS BY THE LAO PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY

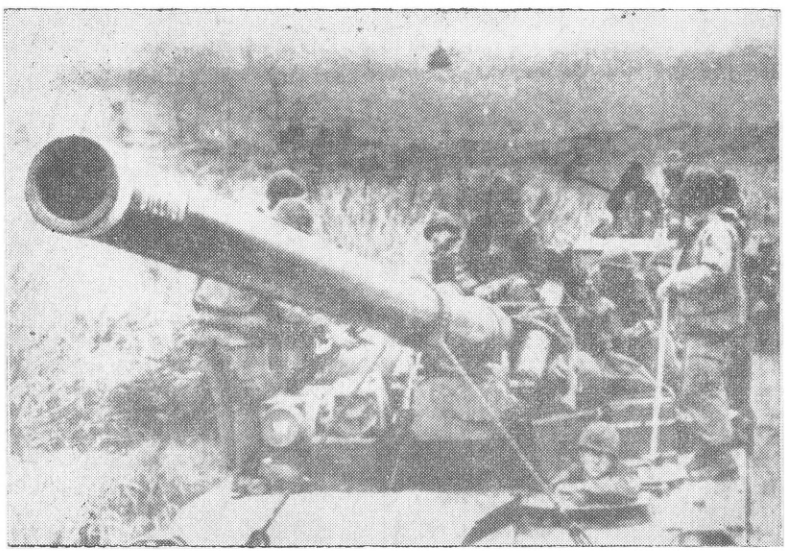
(From February 5 to March 14, 1971)

DATE	*AIRCRAFT*
February 5, 1971	4
— 7, 1971	10
— 8, 1971	22 (including the 1,600th)
— 10, 1971	42
— 11, 1971	10
— 12, 1971	1
— 14, 1971	5 (including the 1,700th)
— 15, 1971	11
— 16, 1971	14
— 18, 1971	12
— 19, 1961	11
— 20, 1971	13
— 21, 1971	12
— 22, 1971	9
— 23, 1971	3
— 24, 1971	3
— 25, 1971	31 (including the 1.800th)
— 28, 1971	5
March 1st, 1971	11
— 2nt, 1971	15
— 3rd, 1971	15
— 5 , 1971	30
— 6 , 1971	18 (including the 1,900th)
— 7 , 1971	3
— 8 , 1971	6
— 10 , 1971	3
— 11 , 1971	7
— 12 , 1971	12
— 13 , 1971	3
— 14 , 1971	11
— 15 , 1971	18
— 16 , 1971	2
From March 17 to 20, 1971	123 (including the 2,000th)
TOTAL :	496 AIRCRAFT

Units of Saigon puppet troops wiped out on Highway 9 front

Speciality	Name of annihilated units	Date	Place
Paratroops	— The 1st brigade — The 3rd brigade its command captured) — The 8th battalion of the 3nd brigade	March 20, 1971 Feb. 25, 1971 March 3, 1971	Ban Dong (A Luoi) Peak 456 Peak 456
Armour cavalry	— The 1st « Special Mission » armour brigade composed of 4 armour regiments (the 4th, the 7th, the 11th and the 17th)	From March 3 to March 20, 1971,	Ban Dong and Peak 456, Kaki bridge Houeisan
Marines	— The 147th brigade — The 258th brigade heavily decimated	March 22 1971 Early March 71	Height 550 Phou Co Boc
Rangers	— The 1st mixed detachment was badly mauled (the 21st and 39th battalions virtually wiped out)	February 13, 1971	La Tuong Peak 550
First Infantry division	— The 1st regiment — The 2nd regiment — The 3rd regiment heavily decimated (2 battalions nearly wiped out)	March 18 March 3, 1971 March 1st 1971	Tam Luong and Peak 619
Artillery	— 1 battalion — 1 battalion — 1 battalion — 4 battalions — 1 battalion	Feb.25, March 4, March 18 March 20 March, 22, 1971	Peak 456 Peak 665 Peak 723 (Lolo) Ban Dong Peak 550

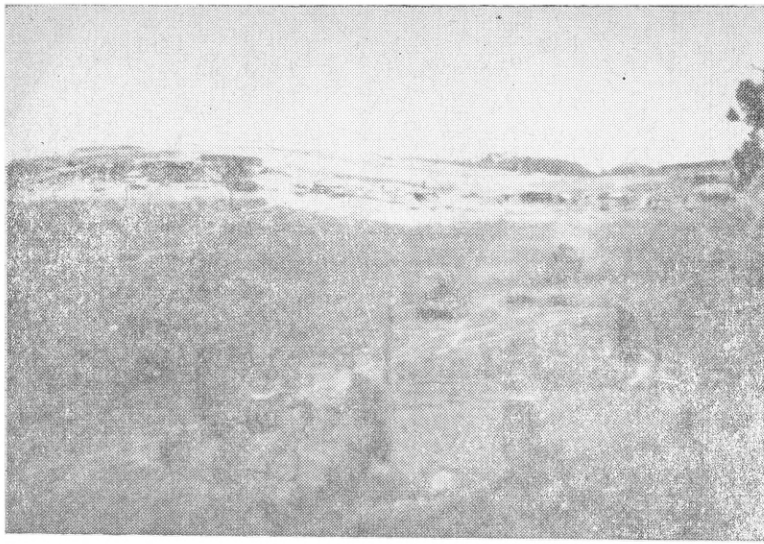




Banking on US artillery and air cover,
Saigon puppet troops strutted into Laos.

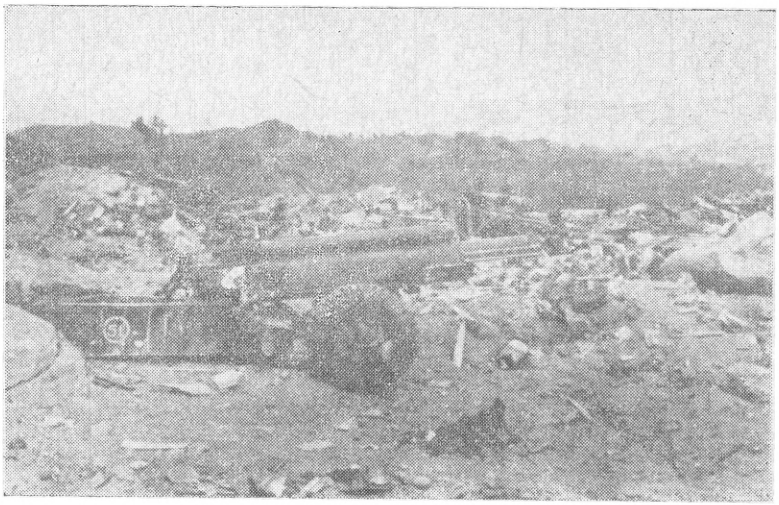
Lao liberation troops marching to the front

All for the front



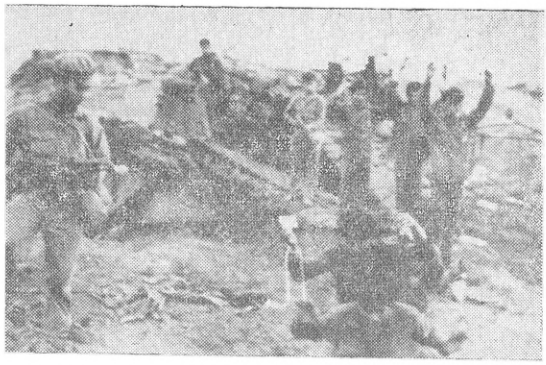
Lao liberation tanks

Lao liberation AA



Debris of Saigon armour

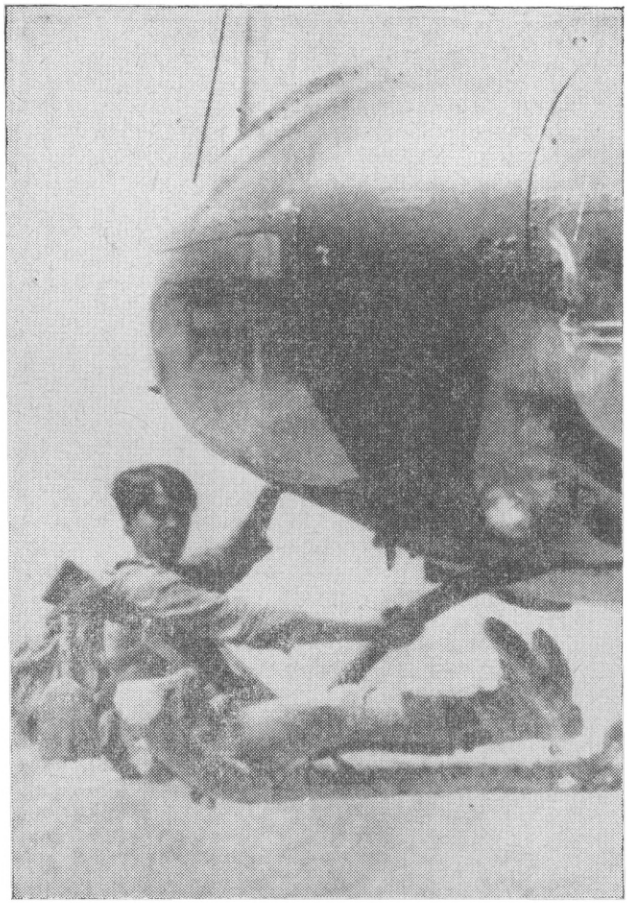
Ban Dong, the main group of points d'appui for the Saigon troops was crushed by the Lao Liberation Army on March 20, 1971



Saigon paratroops surrendered on Hill 456

Capture of the whole staff of the Saigon Third Para Brigade

US helicopters seized intact in Ban Dong



Shameful retreat of US-Saigon troops

Prince Souphanouvong, President of the Central Committee of the Lao Patriotic Front, decorating the units which distinguished themselves in the fighting.

Lao Liberation troops chasing the enemy in flight
« Lamvong » dance to greet the victory.

DOCUMENTS

APPEAL

OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE LAO PATRIOTIC FRONT

TO THE LAO PEOPLE AND TO THE WORLD PEACE-LOVING PEOPLES

Over recent days, in co-operation with the Vientiane puppet troops, the Nixon administration has massively sent to Southern Laos tens of thousands of troops US and Saigon troops and many thousand troops of the Thai and Lon Nol reactionaries to perpetrate a direct invasion of our country.

To pave the way for this large-scale aggressive operation and to support it, the US Air Force has mobilized hundreds of jet planes including B.52s to bomb the provinces in Southern Laos, devastating populous centres and savagely massacring people.

Pursuing their perfidious policy of « making Indochinese fight Indochinese and Asians fight Asians » in an attempt to impose their neo-colonialist regime on Indochina, the US imperialists are bent on dragging out their war of aggression in Laos and South Viet Nam,

extending it to Cambodia and carrying out provocations against the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. Now they are further expanding this war in our country, thus fanning up the flame of war in Indochina. In an attempt to save the « Nixon doctrine » from failure and to get out of their losing position, the US imperialists, their flunkeys in Saigon and their valets in South-East Asia are engaging in a new, large-scale military adventure in our country, taking a new and extremely dangerous step of war escalation, grossly trampling on our independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutrality, in disregard of the Geneva Agreements and international law, seriously menacing peace and security in South-East Asia and the world. This is an insolent challenge to the Lao people as well as to the 50 million people in Indochina and a challenge to American and world opinion.

Undermining every effort of the Lao Patriotic Front towards a peaceful settlement of the Lao problem and ignoring our people's aspirations for peace, the US imperialists and their Saigon lackeys are sending their troops to invade the southern part of our territory, inflicting untold evil upon our people. But this is only an adventurous act on the part of the US imperialists and their flunkeys to retrieve themselves from their losing position. Our national territory is not a place where they can act at will. By invading the southern part of our country, they only deepen our people's hatred and will have to pay dear for every movement of their troops in our land.

For years, together with the fraternal Vietnamese and Khmer peoples, our people have been fighting heroically against the US imperialist aggressors and have recorded glorious victories. We have foiled many steps of war escalation of the Yankee aggressors and their henchmen. In fighting against them, we have seen through their dark designs. At present, the situation in our country has become more serious than ever due to the new invasion by the US imperialists and their Saigon henchmen. However, in our winning position, we are ready to shatter the new step of war escalation by the Yankees and their quislings and to overcome every test of strength imposed by the enemy which we know will be extremely hard, but of which we will finally come out as victor.

In view of the present grave situation in our country the Central Committee of the Lao Patriotic Front calls on the fellow-countrymen of various nationalities to uphold their patriotism, deepen their hatred for the enemy, unite closely against the aggressor troops of the US imperialists and their quislings, develop people's war so as to fight the enemy at any time and any place with every weapon at their disposal, and put up a grim and stubborn struggle in order to drive all the aggressor troops out of our country.

It calls on the officers and men of the Lao People's Liberation Army to tighten their ranks and, together with the troops of the Patriotic Neutralist Forces, to deal harder blows at the US-puppet aggressor troops so as to record many outstanding victories.

It calls on the population of the liberation zone in general, and the people in the provinces of Southern Laos in particular, to fight staunchly in order to efficaciously defend the liberated zone and whole-heartedly assist and co-operate with the patriotic forces in completely annihilating the enemy.

It calls on the population of the zone under the temporary control of the Americans and the Vientiane administration, all social strata, personalities, monks, public employees, pupils and students that are patriotic minded to realize the great danger befalling our nation, energetically protest against this new aggression of the US imperialists and their lackeys, and co-operate with the patriotic forces and our entire people with a view to shattering this US war adventure.

For the sake of peace in South-East Asia and the rest of the world, the Central Committee of the Lao Patriotic Front also issued an urgent appeal:

To the countries to signatories the 1962 Geneva Agreement on Laos, to the peace-loving governments and peoples all over the world, and to the peace and democratic international organizations so as to ask them to condemn and protest energetically against the sending of US-Saigon troops to invade the southern part of our country, take all necessary measures to compel the US imperialists and their lackeys to stop the war escalation in Laos, immediately and totally withdraw their aggressor troopsfrom Laos, and intensify their support to the Lao people's patriotic struggle against US intervention and aggression.

To the progressive people and men of good will in the United States endowed with the fine tradition of freedom, democracy and justice in order to ask them to mobilize all anti-war forces to oppose the new adventure of the Nixon administration which is trying by every means to conceal from American public opinion the direct participation of the US military in the operation against Southern Laos, and compel this administration to end its war of aggression in this land.

Laos is an independent and sovereign country. Our territorial integrity is sacred and inviolable. By waging a war of aggression against our country for many years now, the US imperialists have met with a vigorous resistance from our people, suffered defeat upon defeat and been condemned by the whole progressive mankind. At present, in their losing position, by recklessly sending their troops to invade the southern part of our country, they will certainly incur defeats. Our people ardently cherish peace, but this must be a peace in independence and freedom. We'll not spare any drop of our blood to safeguard our independence and freedom.

We fight against the US imperialist aggressors, this international gendarme, not only for the independence and peace of our people, but also for the world's peoples. Our anti-US struggle for national salvation is a struggle for a just cause. We are strong with the unity of our multinational population, the militant solidarity of fifty mililion Indochinese tempered in the struggle against the common enemy, a solidarity which has been uncessingly strengthened especially since the Summit Conference of the Indochinese Peoples. We enjoy the

vigorous support of the Indochinese peoples. We enjoy the vigorous support of the countries in the socialist camp and all peace-loving people the world over. We are determined not to flinch an inch in face of this new aggression, to accept all sacrifices, to fight energetically to defeat the aggressor troops of the US imperialists and their stooges. We are determined to stand shoulder to shoulder with the fraternal Vietnamese and Khmer peoples in order to completely defeat the US imperialists, to achieve a peaceful, independent, neutral, democratic, unified and prosperous Laos, and to contribute to making Indochina an area of peace in independence and freedom for the Indochinese peoples.

Fellow-countrymen and combatants, let-us-march forward heroically!

We will win!

Sam Neua, February 7, 1971
The Central Committee of the Lao Patriotic Front

COMBAT ORDER OF THE SUPREME COMMAND OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY

At the outset of the current dry season, we have won new victories, smashing all the enemy counter-attacks. Our victories, together with those of the peoples and armed forces of South Viet Nam and Cambodia, have driven the enemy deeper into their losing position and impasse. But the adversary is so mulish that he continues to implement the "Nixon doctrine" and wants to de-escalate from a «position of strength». Since the beginning of this dry season, he has conducted air raids and massive bombardments in Central and Southern Laos and sent in additional Thai troops to kill our fellow-countrymen. Of late, the US imperialists and the Saigon puppets have organized a large-scale aggressive operation involving tens of thousands of Saigon troops and GIs under US air cover. The Vientiane

puppets have co-ordinated their action by occupying Muong Nong area (Savannakhet province) and keeping ready a reserve force to intervene in various places of the country.

This war escalation of the US imperialists and their henchmen is a gross violation of the sovereignty of Laos. It blocks the peaceful settlement of the Lao problem, fans up the flame of the war of aggression in Indochina and undermines peace in South-East Asia.

In face of such a situation, to defend the gains of the revolution, the life of the people and the cause of the Fatherland, the Supreme Command orders all officers and men:

1. To tighten their ranks, enhance their solidarity with the population, develop the fine tradition of the People's Army, resolutely overcome all obstacles and difficulties, bravely fight so as to smash the operations launched by the US imperialists and their henchmen in Vientiane, Saigon, Bangkok, and win greater victories.

2. To co-ordinate more closely the actions of the three categories of troops, and of the various battlefields, expand more swiftly people's war and guerilla war, prevent the adversary from co-ordinating his present military campaigns, wipe out a great number of his manpower, destroy a big amount of his war means, shoot down many US aircraft and step up the persuasion work among enemy troops.

3. To protect the population, maintain order and security, correctly observe discipline and regulations.

The Supreme Command calls on fellow-countrymen all over the country, in the liberated zones as well as in enemy-occupied areas, to take part in the fighting and to do their best to help the armed forces in order to fulfil the sacred task of defeating the US imperialists and their quislings.

The present situation requires that each of us should fight with redoubled efforts to wipe out the enemy and save the country.

This is a most propitious occasion for us to achieve more glorious exploits for the fatherland. We still have many difficulties ahead. But we possess a correct political and military line, we love our fatherland, we hate the enemy, we are strong with the militant solidarity of the Lao, Khmer and Vietnamese peoples, we enjoy the assistance and support of the socialist countries and the peace and justice-loving people in the world. We will certainly foil the aggression of the US imperialists and their henchmen.

Confident in our own strength and in the strength of people's war, let us be more determined to fight and to win.

February 4, 1971
The Supreme Command of the Lao People's Liberation Army

APPEAL

OF PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG PRESIDENT OF THE LAO PATRIOTIC FRONT

Dear fellow-countrymen and combatants throughout the country!

After over two years in office, Nixon has intensified his aggressive war against our country and the other Indochinese countries in execution of his policy of making Asians fight Asians, Indochinese fight Indochinese. Together with the "Vietnamization" aimed at prolonging its war of aggression against South Viet Nam, he has extended the conflict to Cambodia.

Recently, in the hope of escaping from his utter predicament, he took an extremely serious step of war escalation against Laos. All along the past four months, bombings have been conducted round the clock on the liberated zone of Southern Laos by hundreds of aircraft including strategic bombers B.52. Hundreds of thousands of tons of bombs have been dropped and

thousands of tons of toxic chemicals sprayed to devastate our villages. At the beginning of this month, tens of thousands of GIs and Saigon mercenaries, in co-ordination with Vientiane troops and many Thai units, with US air support, launched a massive attack on Savannakhet province and the liberated zone of Southern Laos, massacring our fellow-countrymen in an utter savage manner.

Once more the US imperialists unmask their hideous faces of aggressors. They clamour about their "respect for Laos' neutrality", their "desire for peace", and their "observance of the Geneva Agreements". They grossly trample upon our independence and sovereignty and sabotage the 1962 Geneva Agreement on Laos of which the US government was a signatory.

Once again the Vientiane administration proves to be a tool of Washington. In face of the brazen aggression of our country, the ultras, lackeys of the Americans, make a pretence of complaint against the Saigon government. In truth, they have connived with it and their Yankee bosses to carry out the operation. They have put forward fallacious allegations to conceal the real nature of the US aggression. They have betrayed our people's interests. They must answer for their acts before history and must shoulder all the consequences arising from their criminal acts.

Should the Saigon administration refuse to draw a lesson from its failure in Cambodia and go ahead in its adventure against our country, it will meet a well-deserved punishment.

If the Bangkok reactionaries blindly lend a hand to the US aggressors, they will not escape ignominious failure.

Dear fellow-countrymen,

To the peace efforts and the 5-point political solution of the Lao Patriotic Front which conform to the deep aspirations of all nationalities in Laos and the peace-loving people in the world, the US imperialists and their henchmen have responded by a massive attack against our country.

These acts expose their stubbornness and bellicosity. Far from proving their strength, they are but reactions of a cornered beast. Hardly had the aggressors set foot in Savannakhet province that they were met with a fierce riposte by the population and armed forces of Southern Laos. We have annihilated whole adverse battalions, put out of action thousands of enemy troops, brought down and destroyed hundreds of US aircraft, tanks and armoured cars. We have smashed many waves of heliborne landing operations and broken up many attacks. I warmly commend our fellow-countrymen and fighters in Southern Laos for their outstanding exploits.

Dear fellow-countrymen,

Deeply cherishing peace, our people has only one desire: to build our country in independence and freedom. But the US imperialists have for many years brought war to our country, then intensified, extended and prolonged it.

They hope to bring our people to their knees, with their bombs and their massacres. But they definitely cannot curb our unshakable determination to resist US aggression and save the country.

Under the leadership of the Lao Patriotic Front, our armed forces and people have valiantly made every sacrifice, overcome all difficulties and obstacles, and recorded one success after another. We have gained glorious victories in Nam Tha, Nam Bac, the Plain of Jars, Saravane, Attopeu and many other places. Giving full scope to our people's long tradition of courageous and indomitable struggle, we are determined to strengthen further our national unity bloc and fight against the common enemy until we achieve independence and freedom. We are determined not to fall back into slavery and to let the US imperialists turn our country into a new-type colony and military base.

In these momentous hours, I call on our combatants throughout the country to deal the enemy the heaviest blows, to carry on the fight until complete victory and turn Southern Laos into a grave-yard for the US and satellite aggressors. Let every-one of us, old and young, men and women, intensify the war of resistance. Let those who can hold a gun use it to kill the enemy. Let those who cannot hold a gun assume other jobs to serve the fight.

I especially appeal to our armed forces and fellow-countrymen in Southern Laos to overcome all difficulties, fight valiantly and tenaciously, attack vigorously and relentlessly, wipe out much enemy manpower,

shoot down many aircraft,and destroy as many military vehicles and artillery pieces of the enemy as possible. Let them smash the military adventure of the US imperialists and their Saigon valets.

Let the functionaries, soldiers, and police in the Vientiane administration realize clearly the fatherland is in danger owing to the aggression of the US imperialists and their henchmen. Let everybody, national and patriotic-minded, side with the people and resist the order of the traitorous reactionaries. Let the soldiers refuse to serve as cannon-fodder for the imperialist aggressors, turn their weapons against the enemies of the nation and return to the people's ranks.

On behalf of the Lao people and the Lao Patriotic Front, I take this opportunity to sincerely thank the fraternal countries, the world's people including the progressive people in the US, for their support to the just struggle of our people. I call on them to further increase their all-round support to us until final victory.

So long as the US imperialists have not given up their aggressive schemes against Laos and withdrawn all US and satellite troops, the Lao people will carry on their fight for independence and freedom. With the judicious line of the Lao Patriotic Front, with the ever firmer national unity bloc, the steady alliance between the Lao Patriotic Front and the Patriotic Neutralist Forces, with the growing support of our friends, and with the militant solidarity of the 50 million people of Indochina, the Lao people will foil

all the war adventures of the US imperialists and their henchmen, and achieve a peaceful, independent, neutral, democratic, unified and prosperous Laos. Fighting shoulder to shoulder with the heroic Vietnamese and Khmer peoples, the Lao people are resolved to drive the US aggressors out of the Indochinese peninsula and make it a peaceful and independent area.

Let all fellow-countrymen and combatants throughout the country valiantly march forward!

Sam Neua, February 16, 1971

Prince SOUPHANOUVONG
President of the Central Committee of
the Lao Patriotic Front

COMBAT ORDER OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY COMMAND IN SOUTHERN LAOS

THE aggressive operation launched by the Americans and their Saigon puppets against the southern part of our country has failed.

Panic-striken, the enemy is on the verge of being annihilated and tries to withdraw.

Avail yourselves of this opportunity to wipe him out.

Encircle him and don't let him run away. Down his helicopters to cut off his air route. Destroy his motorised vehicles, cut off his land roads and check his

retreat through the jungle. Hit him hard without let-up, control the battlefield, take prisoners, seize weapons and chase the fleeing forces. You must call the adverse officers and soldiers to surrender, stand vigilant and ready to foil all the cruel and perfidious schemes of the enemy.

Rush forward to win greater victories!

Tchepone, 12 hours, March 16, 1971

SPECIAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE SUPREME COMMAND OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY

The aggressive operation Dewey Canyon II (later dubbed "Lam Son 719") conducted by the Americans and their Saigon puppets in Southern Laos has ended in complete defeat.

Our people and armed forces have won total victory in this historic campaign.

In their passive and losing position, the US imperialists and the Saigon stooges have ventured to launch this aggressive operation against our country. They have dispatched about 45,000 men, belonging mostly to the general reserve force of the Saigon puppet army and an important part of the US forces along with a large quantity of war means to Highway 9 with Dong Ha and Khe Sanh bases as staging area for attacks against Southern Laos. They have hurled into Laos more than

20,000 Saigon puppet troops as the striking force with the support of a big US air armada and the participation of many US troops. They have also deployed about 25,000 troops, mostly American, along the Highway 9 between Lao Bao and Dong Ha (South Viet Nam) to serve as a reserve force.

To lend a hand to the aggressors, the Vientiane puppets and the Thai starting from Seno and Pakse have struck west of Highway 9 and the Boloven High Plateau.

Behind this operation lay very great ambitions, namely, to cause great difficulties to the struggle of the three Indochinese peoples against US aggression, in an attempt at turning the war situation in Indochina to their advantage, stave off the failure of the "Vietnamization of the war" programme in South Viet Nam, shore up the valets of the Americans in Laos and Cambodia who are in a bad fix, testify to the effectiveness of the reactionary "Nixon doctrine" and create favourable conditions for Nixon's eventual reelection to the Presidency of the United States.

However, the US imperialists and their lackeys have committed an extremely grave mistake.

All the mad ambitions of Nixon and his placemen in this operation have been thwarted.

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Right since February 8, when the enemy troops moved into our country, our armed forces, fully

prepared, dealt them powerful initial blows, causing heavy losses to their troop landing.

Our forces blocked the enemy columns at Ban Dong, Chaki and Phou Co Bok.

Meanwhile, they wiped out a battalion of Vientiane puppet troops moving to Muong Phalane to co-ordinate with the Saigon puppet troops, and destroyed or decimated 4 other Vientiane battalions in the Western part of Boloven—Nam Luc area.

Getting bogged down, the enemy had to switch on to the defensive and dug in in hilltop enclaves. From February 13 to early March, our forces launched relentless waves of powerful attacks, and successively destroyed the enemy bases at La Tuong, Chaki and Hill 456, wiping out the 3rd paratroop battalion and the 21st ranger battalion, and smashed all enemy counter-attacks in Northern Ban Dong, wiping out the 17th armoured regiment, part of the 11th armoured regiment, and the 8th paratroops battalion. Meanwhile, on the Khe Sanh front the people's liberation armed forces destroyed the 39th ranger battalion on Hill 500, north of Lang Sen. The enemy's northern prong was broken.

At the same time, our forces successively wiped out the enemy at Phou Co Bok, Phou Coc Tom, and Hills 405 and 619, heavily mauling and repelling the enemy's southern prong.

The enemy main complex in the Ban Dong — Kaki area was put under siege and heavy pressure.

Faced with heavy setbacks which upset his initial plan, the enemy sent reinforcements drawn from the

battlefields of Cambodia, the 5th zone and Western Highlands (South Viet Nam) to go on with his plan. He changed his tactical manoeuvres, resorting to leap-frogging from hilltop to hilltop in the mountain ridges from Western Ban Dong to Southeastern Tchepone in an effort to produce an imaginary victory likely to cover up his defeat. However, his troops were repeatedly attacked and annihilated.

Our forces immediately tightened their grip on the enemy complex at Ban Dong. After making short work of a string of enemy bases on Hills 639 and 748 and inflicting heavy losses on the 2nd infantry regiment, they moved in and destroyed the 1st regiment of the 1st infantry division on Hill 723. The bulk of the enemy forces in Western Ban Dong was wiped out.

Faced with the danger of total annihilation, the enemy tried to escape.

On the afternoon of March 18, our forces launched a large-scale attack, with close co-ordination between the various services, against the enemy complex. By the morning of March 20, our troops had put out of action the enemy troops and completely liberated the Ban Dong area: the enemy had lost the bulk of two brigades and four artillery battalions of the Saigon puppet army, and all their tanks and armoured cars.

In the impetus of their victories, our troops carried on their offensive; they occupied Peak 660 (South-West of Ban Dong), virtually annihilated the 2nd regiment of the 1st infantry division, and wiped out the 147th marines brigade on Peak 550 (South-East of Ban Dong).

Since late January 1971, when the enemy began moving his troops to Highway 9, the South Viet Nam People's Liberation Army on the Khe Sanh battlefield has continually attacked the adversary, cut his land, air and waterways, harassed his operational HQs, depots and US units at rear defence lines, destroying much manpower (mostly American) and a large quantity of war means. The enemy met with great difficulties in deploying troops, carrying supplies and co-ordinating his action with the Southern Laos front. When the adversary began fleeing from Southern Laos, the people's liberation armed forces on the Khe Sanh front blocked his retreat and wiped him out, while violently attacking his bases and command posts at Khe Sanh, Ta Con, Lao Bao, Ta Pouc and inflicting heavy losses upon him.

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Through 43 days and nights of continual, valiant and resourceful fighting, and with a very high determination to win, our people and armed forces have recorded tremendous and very glorious victories.

We have wiped out an important part of the forces and war means of the Americans and Saigon puppets belonging to all arms and services: paratroops, armour, marines, ranger, regular infantry, mostly of the general reserve, the hard core of the Saigon puppet army; 15,400 enemy troops (including 200 American) have been killed or wounded, and 1,000 others (including many field and company officers) captured.

terms of units, we have put out of action 2 brigades of the Saigon paratroops division, the 2nd "special mission" armoured brigade (composed of 4 regiments), the 147th marines brigade, the 1st and 2nd regiments; badly mauled the 3rd regiment of the 1st infantry division, the 1st ranger outfit and the 258th marines brigade; annihilated 8 artillery battalions and decimated 5 others.

In terms of war means, we have destroyed or captured 496 aircraft (mostly helicopters), 586 military vehicles (including 318 tanks and armoured cars), 144 heavy artillery pieces, more than 5,000 weapons of various kinds, a large quantity of important documents and military equipment.

We have foiled all the main tactical moves of the enemy: heliborne, armour-spearheaded, hilltop dug-in, leapfrogging and intense artillery barrage in support of infantry.

We have successfully defended the liberated zone, Tchepone town, the lives and property of the population, our bases and depots, and kept communications and transport going without a hitch.

* * *

The great victory of our armed forces and people fighting side by side with the South Viet Nam people and heroic armed forces on Highway 9 in defeating the aggressive operation "Dewey Canyon II" (later dubbed "Lam Son 719") of the Americans and Saigon puppets in Southern Laos, and the great victory of the Cambodian people's liberation armed forces in defeating the

operation "Total victory 1-71" of the American and Saigon puppets in Northeastern Cambodia, are of very great strategic significance and of special political and military importance.

Those victories constitute a stunning blow at the US imperialists' scheme to prolong and expand their war of aggression in Indochina, at their "Vietnamization of the war" plan, and a telling blow at the reactionary doctrine of Nixon and company.

They constitute a very hard blow dealt at the US imperialists and Saigon puppets' aggressive will, making the already sinking morale of both the Americans and their lackeys sink even more quickly.

The victory testifies to the abundant strength and leaping maturation of our armed forces in the matter of courage, intelligence, military art and combat skills.

It rejoices and strongly stimulates our armed forces and people, those of the fraternal countries on the Indochinese peninsula; it gladdens our friends all over the world. It has a great influence on the evolution of the war on the various battlefronts in Indochina, helping the war of resistance of the Lao, Vietnamese and Khmer peoples against US aggression and for national salvation develop in their favour, and opening splendid vistas before them.

This victory has a great impact on the political situation of the United States, raising ever stronger protests of the American people against the policy of the bellicose Nixon clique, sharpening its internal contradictions, aggravating the already insuperable difficulties of the US imperialists and powerfully stimulating the

movement of the American people and the world's peoples in support of the just struggle of the three Indochinese peoples.

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The great victory in Southern Laos is a brilliant victory of our most correct and imaginative political and military line, of our talented strategic and operational leadership, and of our superior military art. We have checked the enemy at Ban Dong, foiling his scheme to enter Tchepone. We have smashed the adversary column after column, and at last overrun his complex in Ban Dong, completely foiling his military adventure.

This resounding victory accounts for our people's ardent patriotism, their deep hatred for the aggressors and the traitors, their determination to endure all sacrifices for the independence and freedom of the fatherland, and to fulfil their noble internationalist duty. It is a brilliant illustration of our national tradition of heroic and indomitable struggle and of the revolutionary heroism of our armed forces and people.

This historic victory testifies to the militant solidarity as solid as the majestic Phou Louang (the Indochinese Cordillera — Ed) and to the warm fraternal friendship as mighty as the Mekong River between two fraternal Indochinese peoples. This is a combat coordination of patriotic forces on all the fronts in Laos, a harmonious and fruitful coordination with the Viet Nam people's armed forces on the Khe Sanh front who have dealt

murderous blows at the enemy's troops in the rear area of this aggressive operation, inflicting heavy losses on and sowing confusion among the enemy. This is a combat coordination of the armed forces of fraternal Viet Nam and Cambodia, who have dealt sledge-hammer blows at the adversary, and driven him into an ever critical situation.

On this occasion, our people and armed forces express sincere thanks to the heroic Vietnamese people and armed forces and to the heroic Khmer people and armed forces, our comrades-in-arms struggling on the same front against US aggression, for national salvation.

This victory is inseparable of the whole-hearted and effective support and strong stimulation given us by the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, the big rear area, the solid base of the resistance war of the three peoples on the Indochinese peninsula. It is also possible thanks to the very precious assistance, sympathy and support of the socialist countries and the peace-and justice-loving people all over the world.

On this occasion, our people and armed forces express their profound gratitude for that invaluable sympathy and support.

In this great test of strength between us and the US – Saigon aggressors, although the latter had mobilized to a high degree the "potential" and "absolute superiority" of their weapons, techniques and war means, our army has shown its marvellous courage, resourcefulness, manoeuvrability, tenaciousness and endurance.

All arms and services: infantry, armour, artillery, anti-aircraft, transport, engineering, signal, regular force, regional force... have fought well, and won repeated and brilliant victories.

The more they fight, the stronger our armed forces become, materially and morally. They far outdo the enemy not only in fighting morale but also in combat skill. They have made leaping bounds in the combat coordination between various arms to obtain high combat efficiency. They have proved capable of waging large-scale battles, of destroying battalions, regiments or even brigades, as witness 2 enemy brigades almost put out of action.

The front-service units have also made great progress. They have timely and fully met all the demands of a big campaign unfolding on a vast battlefield under fierce fighting conditions.

All units of various arms on all theatres of operations achieved a close combat coordination, and displayed a high sense of self-imposed discipline.

The Supreme Command warmly congratulates and commends all units of various arms, all officers and men who have contributed to the glorious victories in this historic campaign. It warmly congratulates the fellow-countrymen of all nationalities for their wholehearted support to and co-operation with the armed forces to defeat the enemy.

The military adventure of the Americans and their Saigon puppets in Southern Laos has lamentably failed. However, stubborn and bellicose by nature, the US im-

perialists have not-yet given up their aggressive design against our country and other countries of Indochina. In their critical situation, they will plot new schemes and resort to more cruel and perfidious war acts in an attempt at staving off their unavoidable defeat.

Therefore, our people and armed forces must heighten their vigilance, unite closely, and in the impetus of their victories continue to attack the enemy on all the battlefields and fight courageously and tenaciously until complete victory.

Our people are resolved to struggle shoulder to shoulder with the fraternal Vietnamese and Khmer peoples so as to drive the US imperialists out of the Indochinese peninsula and to wrest back independence, freedom and territorial integrity.

Let Nixon and company be aware that if they persist in prolonging and expanding their aggressive war, they will incur heavier and more ignominous setbacks. He who sows the wind will reap the whirlwind.

Let our armed forces and people heroically march forward!

The Lao, Vietnamese and Khmer peoples will triumph!

The US imperialists will be defeated!

Sam Neua, March 23, 1971

The Supreme Command of the Lao people's Liberation Army

MESSAGE

OF PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG, PRESIDENT OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE LAO PATRIOTIC FRONT TO THE ARMED FORCES AND POPULATION OF HIGHWAY 9 AREA

Dear officers, soldiers and fellow-countrymen of Highway 9 area,

THE Central Committee and myself are very glad to congratulate you on the splendid victory you have just won. You have display boundless loyalty to the fatherland, upheld our tradition of indomitable struggle, ardent patriotism, and a deep hatred for the enemy. You have closely coordinated your action with that of the fraternal peoples of Viet Nam and Cambodia, and fulfilled the task entrusted by the Central Committee. You have shattered a large-scale strategic operation conducted by the US — Saigon troops against our country and dealt a hard blow at the US imperialists' aggressive will.

The battle on Highway 9 has shone with the revolutionary heroism of our troops and our population. It testifies to the rapid growth of the LPLA, to the

art of conducting the armed forces of the LPLA Supreme Command and Command of the Southern Laos front, to the staunch fighting spirit of the officers and men, and to the great devotion of the local population in serving the armed forces.

The victory on Highway 9 is a common victory of the three Indochinese peoples united in the struggle against US aggression and guided by the resolutions of the Indochinese Peoples' Summit Conference. It is the outcome of a new turning-point in the sacred liberation struggle put up by the three peoples with the whole-hearted assistance of their brothers and friends all over the world.

The American imperialists and their lackeys have suffered a heavy defeat. However, Nixon and his ilk are diehard and perfidious. Therefore, our officers, soldiers and fellow-countrymen in Southern Laos as well as throughout the country must heighten their vigilance and follow up the advantage created by the big victory won on Highway 9.

Shoulder to shoulder with the fraternal Vietnamese and Cambodian peoples, let all of us heroically march forward, attack the enemy without respite to win still greater victories.

Sam Neua, March 25, 1971

PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG
President of the Central Committee of
the Lao Patriotic Front

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE LAO PATRIOTIC FRONT TO THE ARMED FORCES AND POPULATION TAKING PART IN THE FIGHTING ON HIGHWAY 9

Dear officers, soldiers and fellow-countrymen,

Some scores of days ago, in face of the great danger caused by the strategic aggressive operation launched by the Americans and their Saigon valets in the south of our country, the Central Committee has sent to the armed forces and people in the South as was as throughout the country a message calling on you to save the country. Today the Central Committee is very glad that the people all over the country and especially the officers, soldiers and fellow-countrymen in Southern Laos have enthusiastically responded to that appeal and gloriously fulfilled their task of fighting the enemy and defending the fatherland.

After 43 days of unprecedentedly fierce fighting full of sacrifices and hardships, we have won a great victory on Highway 9. In co-ordination with our fighters and

fellow-countrymen on Highway 9 our people and armed forces throughout the country have also won victories. The Central Committee is very glad to send its warmest congratulations to our people and armed forces, especially to those on Highway 9 who have added brilliant pages to the history of the glorious fight of the Indochinese peoples, of the oppressed peoples in the world fighting for national liberation, peace, justice and the future of mankind.

Committing 45,000 troops in a strategic operation, the bellicose Nixon clique has nurtured a cruel and perfidious scheme to crush the sacred resistance of our people against US aggression in its victorious stage, and to create great difficulties to the revolution of the three Indochinese countries. Hence, the historic victory on Highway 9 is a stunning blow at its venturesome scheme and its foolish ambition.

Splendid exploits were achieved; four-fifths of the 20,000 Saigon puppet troops with a mighty US air support have been put out of action; 6 brigades and regiments annihilated; 3 brigades and regiments badly mauled; 2 divisions decimated; nearly all the helicopters engaged in the operation shot down or destroyed; all the tanks and armoured cars of the "special mission" 4th armoured brigade crushed.

All tactical moves used by the Americans on Highway 9 have been foiled. The goals of the operation the strategic and operational aims of the aggressors in this military adventure have also been baffled. Nixon's doctrine of making Indochinese fight Indochinese, his "Vietnamization of the war" policy and his plan of war

escalation have met with stinging setbacks. It is clear that the US imperialists and their henchmen have met with a strategic defeat the grave consequence of which are still unforeseeable.

With the failure of this Operation "Dewey Canyon II" (later dubbed "Lam Son 719") and the setbacks suffered in South Viet Nam and Cambodia, the aggressive will of the US imperialists against Laos and the whole of Indochina has received a staggering blow.

Our historic victory of Highway 9 tips the balance of forces in favour of the revolutionary forces in Laos in particular, and in the three Indochinese countries in general. It will affect more and more deeply the political situation in the United States, stimulate the peace forces in this country to stand up more energetically against Nixon's war policy. It will sharpen the contradictions among the US rulers and drive the Nixon clique to an impasse.

It constitutes a shining manifestation of the tradition of indomitable struggle of the Lao armed forces and people, their ardent patriotism, their deep hatred for the enemy and their staunch determination to fight and make every sacrifice for national liberation. It is also the result of the clearsighted leadership of the Central Committee of the Lao Patriotic Front and the Supreme Command of the Lao People's Liberation Army.

The great victory on Highway 9 also constitutes a brilliant success of the invincible strength of the militant solidarity of the three Indochinese peoples, and of the close combat co-ordination between Laos, Viet Nam and Cambodia.

Our people and armed forces whole-heartedly thank the armed forces and peoples of the fraternal countries of Viet Nam and Cambodia for their assistance and combat co-ordination.

The victory on Highway 9 is also the success of the very valuable support and assistance given by our brothers and friends throughout the world to the cause of the Lao people as well as to that of the Vietnamese and Khmer peoples.

Nevertheless, owing to its stubborn nature, the bellicose Nixon clique does not admit itself beaten. It will certainly plot new adventures to avenge its historic defeat in Southern Laos.

The Central Committee calls on officers, soldiers and fellow-countrymen throughout the country to follow up the successes won by our armed forces and people. Let them heighten their vigilance, refrain from resting on their laurels and from under-estimating the enemy, make new efforts to deliver harder blows at the enemy and win greater victories.

The Central Committee is satisfied with and confident in the determination and the effort of all officers, soldiers and fellow-countrymen.

Sam Neua, March 25, 1971
Prince SOUPHANOUVONG
President of the Central Committee
of the Lao Patriotic Front